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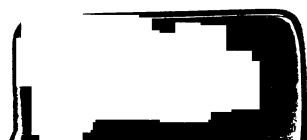
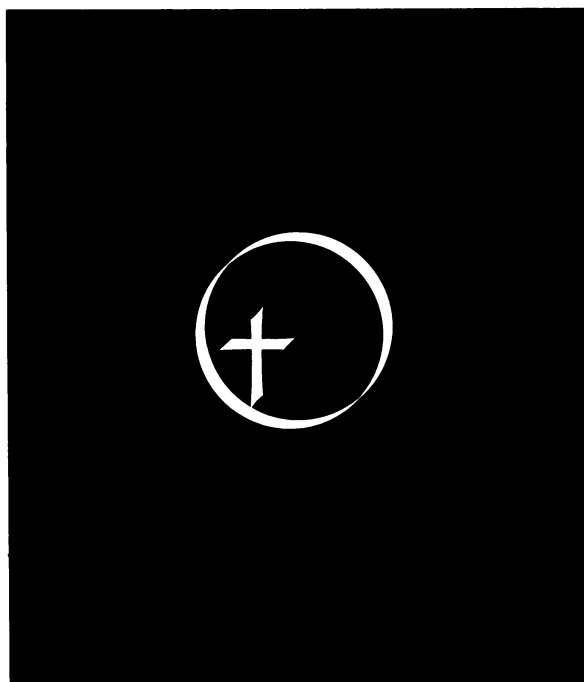
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ESSAYS
DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL.

BY FIFTEEN CLERGYMEN.

With an Introduction
By H. W. THOMAS, D.D.

EDITED
By ORELLO CONE, D.D.
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PREFACE.

THIS volume owes its existence to the conviction on the part of the contributors to its pages that a broad treatment of the theological and religious themes herein discussed would be helpful to the thoughtful and inquiring persons whom they may be so fortunate as to have for their readers. The papers have been prepared by their authors in entire independence of one another and without a knowledge of the opinions set forth by their fellow-contributors. This circumstance determines the responsibility of each writer, and accounts for any want of unity and any conflicts of opinion which may appear in the book.

The Editor has exercised no censorship of the doctrines affirmed by the several contributors, and disclaims responsibility for them.

O. C.

BUCHTEL COLLEGE, AKRON, O.,
Sept. 11, 1889.

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ESSAYS,
DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL.

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INTRODUCTION.

BY H. W. THOMAS, D.D.

THE universe is the objectivized thought of God. Upon the plane of human reason, volition, and moral consciousness, the social order is the objectivized thought of man. Thought as thought is conditioned in the necessary laws of thought; but in the sphere of its external activities it tends to create its own corresponding environments.

The institutionalized forms of society are the expressions of underlying ideas and principles. The principle of despotism is force, the right and power of one to rule over another; and this conception finds its corresponding expression in the despotic forms of government and religion. In its lowest forms it is arbitrary, it rests upon the will of a king or a pope; in its higher expressions it claims a certain divine right through a sovereign selection or appointment in a line of hereditary rulers or a succession of the priesthood. Such a conception very naturally creates its own and corresponding environments of royalty and standing armies in the state, and all the attending power and distinction of a hierarchical church. The government

belongs to the hereditary rulers, and the church to the successional priesthood. Outside of this hereditary sovereignty and this apostolic succession there is no right to establish a government or a church.

Under modified forms of this despotic conception of the State and the Church we find constitutional monarchies with hereditary succession, and Protestant churches with apostolic succession; but through all there runs the fundamental principle that the State rests upon the sovereign, and the Church upon the priesthood; and that the cathedrals and convents and schools belong to the Church and not to the people.

Over against this despotic conception there is the radically different principle of the rights and powers of the people, or of democracy in government and religion. Under God, the people are the sovereign power. They have the divine right to enact laws and establish governments, and they have the same divine right to establish churches, to formulate creeds, and ordain pastors. This democratic idea of the divine rights of the people naturally takes the shape of Republicanism in government and Congregationalism in religion. The people are the government, and the people are the church, and through such forms of representation as they may choose they make their own civil laws; and each congregation controls its own affairs in religion, and the people who build and pay for a church own it.

These opposite ideas and principles have come down to our age as an inheritance from the past, and they lie at the bottom of the controversies of the present. And it is only natural that between related systems there should be a corresponding sympathy in

thought and action. Hence it is not strange that the monarchical and the hierarchical ideas of government and religion should have sought mutual support in the union of Church and State, and that they have journeyed along side by side and generally in such close friendship. Jealousies have arisen between popes and kings; but it is more than a coincidence that they have worked so well together. They have had mutual interests to conserve, and at bottom they stood upon the same principle of a special divine right to rule over others. And just as naturally the Dissenters in England were opposed to the Established Church; and it is in the same line of dissent and protest that in this country the State and the Church have become separate; the Constitution protecting all sects alike in their religious rights.

In tracing in this suggestive way the genesis and evolution of related ideas and principles, and their corresponding forms and environments, we may note still other facts that have a bearing upon the present. As a general statement it may be said, that the principle and form of faith and religion known as Orthodox has found its most natural place and affinities on the side of the monarchical and hierarchical conceptions of the State and the Church. Both rest upon authority, and largely upon external authority; and hence the conception of both is objective and legal, rather than subjective and spiritual.

It is true that the Protestant branch of the Orthodox Church in our own country, and partially so in the Old World, has been on the side of democracy in the State; but not always on the side of democracy in religion. The Church of England still remains a

part of the State; and in the long controversies and struggles between the Dissenters and the Established Church, the effort was at first to compel all to both think alike and do alike. Then the line was gradually drawn between thinking, and saying and doing; and the Established Church gave up the idea of compelling all to think alike, but insisted that all should say and do the same things,—that is, all should use the same liturgical service, repeat the same words, and observe the same forms of worship; and the Dissenters no longer attempted to have all do the same things; they might observe any form they liked, but they insisted that all must believe alike. And in the further working out of these ideas the Episcopal pulpit has come to allow the largest liberty of thought and expression in the sermon; the preacher can say almost anything he pleases, even to the verge of the grossest heresy, and without much danger of being called to account; but he dare not depart from the very words of the liturgy in the prayers and sacraments. On the other hand, there is all the liberty any one could ask in the free simplicity of the forms of service in the Dissenting churches; but the severest denominational restrictions are often placed upon the pulpit. The preacher may stand or kneel in prayer, shorten or omit Scripture lessons, use almost any form he pleases in the baptismal or communion service; but he must look out for the doctrinal phases of the sermon, or the heresy-hunters will soon be on his track.

As a reaction or outgrowth from all this, it was only natural that there should arise both in the Old and the New World churches in which the larger

liberty of the pulpit should be recognized. And yet, in taking this last step, such were the historical antecedents and environments of these new departures that almost unconsciously, and perhaps unavoidably, the more liberal churches received some peculiar dogmatic shaping. They were cast in certain moulds or types of thinking; and within these limitations they were free, just as free as the most Orthodox preachers were free within the limitations of their creeds; that is to say, they could think as much as they pleased, but with the understanding that it had been settled in advance what they should believe, or at least what they should say.

Such limitations were the natural and almost necessary results of controversial periods, when instead of going forth in the loving pursuit of truth, the opposing schools of thought were drawn up in lines of battle, each fighting for its own side or party, and both fighting for victory. And under such circumstances it was only natural that sharp and narrow boundary lines should be established to define the territory of truth for which these armies were contending. On both sides these lines shut in some truth, and shut out some; and on both sides was some error shut out and shut in; but much of the larger truth, or of the truth in its larger forms and meanings as seen by our age, was left out by both parties, as unknown and unclaimed.

The Unitarian Church in this land grew up out of the controversies of less than a hundred years ago. The doctrine of the Trinity as held by the Orthodox was so emphasized as to become really a Tri-Theism; and this, mixed up as it was as an essential part of the

doctrine of the atonement, called forth the protest of earnest minds and scholars, and resulted in a division of the churches in New England ; some going out with the new thought, and others remaining with the old. From this controversy the dissenters received the limiting name of Unitarians ; and what was even more unfortunate, they were placed in a negative attitude which was not favorable to aggressive work. The modern Universalist Church of our country grew up out of a protest against the doctrine of endless punishment as it was held in all its gross and material forms and horrors a hundred years ago. As in the case of the Unitarian controversy, the protest was just, and came from able and earnest men, and in response to the evident needs of the time. The name of Universalists was naturally given to these leaders of the new thought or party ; and hence the church is pushed out doctrinally on a special issue, and put in the position of affirming a result rather than a process ; of emphasizing the end rather than insisting upon the means.

I think it is a fact that not a few of the ablest ministers in both these noble churches feel that they are more or less limited in their work by their denominational environments. The old battles and prejudices are not yet ended ; the Unitarian preacher is met in each new field — and especially is this so in the great Northwest — by the assertion from the Orthodox pulpit, that he does not believe in Christ ; and the Universalist preacher is met by the assertion that he believes that all will be saved any way ; and all this in spite of the fact that the Unitarian does believe in Christ, and that the Universalist believes that all will be

saved, — not “any way,” but in the very special way of the only salvation that there is or can be, or that is worth having ; and that is the salvation of character. It may take months and years to overcome these misrepresentations ; and it takes a very strong man to become larger than his denominational limitations, and if he be able to do this, the chances are that it will get him into trouble with his denomination. And for this reason : that it is only natural again, that in the evolution of higher truths, and especially where the development had its beginning in controversy, that the leaders should try to finish their work ; and that they should do this by trying to give to those truths, as they see them, an unchangeable form. That becomes the creed by which they wish the future to be governed. Not content to state the truth as they see it, and to trust it and their work to others, they would say what the future workers and thinkers must believe and do. With old age generally comes conservatism, — a feeling that the best has been reached, that the new has been discovered. It is evening, it is night ; it is autumn, it is winter.

But to each rising generation there is a new morning, a new springtime ; and truth, instead of being a mechanism, a something that can be finished and put away, is an organism, a life, a seed to be planted, for whose full growth and flowering and fruiting not to-day alone, but all the long to-morrows are required. Truth is a vast and ever-renewing life ; and necessarily such a time-and-world process of becoming should be permitted to create its own external environments.

The fact of limitations is by no means confined to the Liberal churches ; and indeed from the naturally

larger genius of these organizations the restrictions placed upon the pulpit are less narrow than in the Orthodox churches; but they differ in kind. The name Orthodox is applied to the great number of separate denominations among whom there are general doctrinal agreements; and the differentiating names by which they are separated and known indicate forms of government, rather than differences of belief. The Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Protestant churches are substantially one in their fundamental doctrines. They all believe in original sin, in some form of a substitutional atonement, and in endless punishment; but they differ upon the nature and value of the sacraments, and upon questions of origin, succession, authority, and government. The Catholic and Episcopal churches are hierarchical in form, while the Congregationalists are fraternal; and thus we have the church names of the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the Methodist Episcopal, and the Reformed Episcopal, and the Lutheran. The Baptist Church is, perhaps, the only exception; and that takes its name from their insistence upon the form of an ordinance, and not from any essential doctrinal difference, for they belong to the great Orthodox family or system of faith.

But the differentiating name of Unitarian and Universalist points to a special doctrinal position; it is theological rather than ecclesiastical; and as such, the almost unavoidable tendency is to take them out of the broad field of truth, and to place them under the narrower limitations of specialists. It may be said that this ought not to be so, for these churches really stand for something more, — for a system of

faith ; but, nevertheless, it is so. How much larger would be the field of thought and work and possibility, did the name Unitarian mean the unification of Christendom, and the name Universalist stand for the universal in religion ! With these limitations taken away, how mighty would be the inspiration to go forth and call the ungathered millions who are wandering about as "sheep without a shepherd," to come into the one great fold of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God ; to come into the great and divine soul-and-world home of universal truth, universal right, of universal love and eternal hope !

It is here that more or less pressure is felt all along the lines of both the Liberal and the Orthodox churches. We are in a period of transition, and hence of unrest. In the churches where the emphasis is placed upon forms there is a desire for a larger liberty in the use of the liturgy ; or, as in the United Presbyterian Church, an effort to introduce instrumental music, and the singing of hymns as well as psalms ; and even the pious Quakers are asking for a change in their style of dress. The Methodists have long since abandoned the efforts to enforce the old rule forbidding the "wearing of gold and costly apparel," and not a few of them now wear diamonds and go to the theatre and dance just like other mortals. In all this there is seen the tendency of our age to a larger liberty ; but the greatest strain is now felt, not upon the questions of forms, but upon questions of thought ; and upon these even the Liberal churches are not at rest.

The Unitarians have passed through the Channing, the Emerson, and the Theodore Parker periods of

excitement, and are now debating and even divided upon the ethical-culture substitute for a religion that dares profess its faith in God and a future life. The Universalist Church is considering the question of a revised creed ; and its ablest ministers are arrayed upon the opposite sides of the questions of the natural and the supernatural, and other related dogmas : the conservative party — generally the older men — claiming that the church was founded upon and committed to their views ; the other party in the debate insisting that the genius of Universalism is, or should be, sufficiently tolerant of differences to hold the thinking of all its children. The denomination has in the past quietly slipped away from the earlier form of its special and larger faith ; very few, perhaps, now holding to the old “ death and glory ” doctrine of salvation, but rather to the later view that the soul begins its life in the spirit world where it leaves it in this ; that death works no moral change in character ; and that the life to come is one of discipline, of education, and progress. And some of the strongest men feel that there is still room for growth, and that the interests of truth require such a restatement of other doctrines as will place them in nearer accord with the generally accepted scientific teaching of the age.

These debates have not only their local and denominational interests, but also their larger significance in the light of the great world-advance of thought. But it is within the Orthodox churches that the strain is greatest and most deeply felt. From their narrower historical and doctrinal antecedents and environments their position is less favor-

able to progress. Indeed the genius of Orthodoxy is opposed to change; and as a system it is committed to and rests upon a series of fundamental and related dogmas that are not only utterly indefensible in the light of the present thought and knowledge of the world, but are at war with the eternal principles of justice and with the unprejudiced and deepest moral convictions of mankind.

The whole superstructure of Orthodoxy rests upon the doctrine of the fall of man, or original sin. Upon this is based the necessity of a substitutional atonement to satisfy the claims of justice, or to "reconcile" an angry God; and out of this grow the doctrines of a time-probation and endless punishment. But the doctrine of the fall of man and original sin rests upon a literal interpretation of what is at most but a mystical allegory; it is nowhere referred to in the Old Testament except in the second chapter of Genesis; it was not known to the earlier Jews, and is in the plainest opposition to the moral teachings of the Prophets; and in the New Testament it finds no place in the teachings of Christ, and is referred to by Paul only parenthetically in the fifth chapter of Romans; and there the allusion is to the earth or flesh man, and not to any one progenitor of the whole race. This doctrine of the fall of man is directly opposed to the now generally accepted theory of evolution, which represents man as in the long and slow process of becoming, of rising, and not of falling. And not only this; but the doctrine of original sin formed no part of the earlier Greek teachings of Christianity; it was not known to Clement or Origen, of the second and third centuries; it forms no part of either the Apostles'

or the Nicene Creed. Historically it is a Latin accretion to the purer Christian conceptions of the Greek fathers, and was formulated by Augustine in the fifth century. And naturally enough the doctrines of a penal or substitutional atonement and endless punishment, as found in the Latin theology, formed no part of the earlier Greek conception; but having become the accepted doctrine of the Latin or Roman Catholic Church, they were accepted without question by the Reformers as the doctrinal basis of the Protestant Church.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was a protest against the authority of the Church and the sacramental abuses and corruptions that had come into use; but strangely enough it never questioned the fundamental doctrines upon which this authority rested, and out of which these abuses had come. The new Reformation of the nineteenth century goes deeper, it is a reformation of theology; and it means nothing less than the rejection of this whole external Latin, or Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Protestant doctrine of original sin and the system of theology built upon it, and a return to the earlier spiritual doctrines of the Greek fathers and of the Apostles and Christ.

And this is the tremendous significance of the struggles going on in the Orthodox churches. The foundation upon which their whole system has rested for more than a dozen centuries is giving way, and the system itself is tottering to its final fall. The leaders see this. Many of the most honest are deserting their ranks, or being put out; others, less true to their deepest convictions, or possibly from motives of ex-

pediency, are resorting to all kinds of confused and doubtful equivocations ; and with others still only the name is falsely retained and insisted upon, while the reality — that for which the name should in truthfulness stand — has ceased to have a place in their real beliefs.

The history of the world records no greater transition of thought than that which is now going on, and the signs of which are everywhere apparent. It is more than a transition, it is a revolution ; and it cannot be that such mighty changes can take place without great commotions in the mental and spiritual world ; and of these we have seen only the beginning.

The great world-movement in the direction of a larger personal liberty may be directed, but it cannot be suppressed. The old ideas of despotic power that created their corresponding environments of monarchy and ecclesiasticism, with their supporting armies and crouching subjects and worshippers, must make way for the grander conception of democracy in both government and religion. The boasted doctrines of the divine rights of royalty and the priesthood through heredity and succession are doomed ; and along with them must go the union of Church and State ; and with this must come disestablishment. It is one of the wonders of history that the few have so long ruled the many ; but now is the age and the power of the people, and of the rights of man as man.

In this new and soon-coming social order of the world, the authority of antiquity and precedent, simply as such, will have less and less place ; and right and truth will more and more become the su-

preme arbiters. The claims of power must be weighed in the scales of justice ; and no supposed truth, however old or venerable, can hope to escape the ordeal of reason or the logic of facts. Right will be right, and wrong will be wrong, whether in high places or low ; and truth will be truth, whether told in the story of the stars and fossils or translated from a Hebrew text. Nor will errors and mistakes and falsehoods cease to be such if found in the decisions of church councils, the doctrines of church creeds, or in the Bible.

Such is the "great white throne" before which all questions of fact or right or truth must be judged in these mighty years. And before such a tribunal must go down not only the external forms of a despotic past, but the underlying ideas and principles also must pass away. The Orthodox churches may, and will through the power of their great organizations, continue for a time to hold their places ; and by gradually slipping away from their old forms of belief, as they are all the time doing, may continue to lead millions of minds ; but these doctrines in their essential features cannot much longer stand in the light and freedom of this age. They are not only false in many things, but in not a few they are wicked ; they unsettle the very foundations of justice, and they charge upon God cruelties that would have disgraced a Nero or a Caligula. The Orthodox doctrine of original sin — that every child is born not only depraved, but under just condemnation to everlasting death — is also a monstrous outrage upon the reason and justice of man ; nor is it in the least helped by the Orthodox doctrine of atonement ; and

it reaches its natural climax of horror in the Orthodox doctrine of everlasting punishment. The educated preachers in those churches who see and feel these things should have the courage to come out boldly and say so. The cause of truth demands it.

But what shall be said of the debates in the Liberal churches? The character of the questions under discussion is different; they relate more to questions of literature and science and natural laws, and hence do not put such a moral strain upon the conscience as do the controversies in the Orthodox churches. And from this very fact it would seem that there should be room for the largest personal liberty; for upon the doctrines of atonement and salvation through character, or oneness with the true and the good, construction, and of the destiny of man, they are agreed.

But it may be asked, should there be no limits beyond which one may not go? Certainly; and that limit is the truth itself. The truth is that which is; error is that which is not. But who shall decide? When any one attempts to limit others by his own definition of a truth, he may thereby limit the truth itself. That is what Orthodoxy has done; and that is what the Liberal churches should be careful not to do. It ought to be safe to trust the truth to its own keeping in the minds and hearts of earnest, reverent thinkers; and it is such only that affect the thinking of the world. And indeed this is the highest test of the great faith in truth for which the Liberal churches stand. The test of the faith of democracy is that it is not afraid to trust the people; to trust all the sacred interests of government and religion to

their keeping. And our Government is large enough to hold all the different parties and sects, political and religious; and its great principles of liberty unite all in one country. Why should not the great name of religion be large enough to hold all who love the truth and the right? The conceptions of art, of music, of philosophy, should be large enough to include under those great names all who love truth or beauty or song.

We have yet to learn the lesson of the larger mental hospitality that does not refuse to entertain the thoughts of those who differ from us, and to try to see what of truth there may be in their theories, and the reasons why they believe as they do. It is a sign of mental inhospitality, of bigotry, to denounce Spiritualism or Christian Science as wholly false, and to refuse to welcome any truth that these or other systems of thought may have. There is great need, in our time, for minds sufficiently large, catholic, and well-informed to walk around amidst all the many isms and sects and in a kind and discriminating spirit separate the true from the false. And the Church in our age should be large enough to tolerate special phases of thought and belief, even when not free from error or extravagance in statement. Less harm would result to the cause of truth from such a hospitality, than from the exclusiveness that denies it, and forces each new and partially formed idea out by itself; and with the almost certain result of still greater errors through the exaggerations of that which, in its proper relations, might well be accepted.

It will be a great day for our world when there shall

arise a Church with faith enough in its own faith to trust that faith to grow up into larger and richer forms of truth and life in other minds and hearts ; a Church large enough and loving enough to hold all the thinking of all its children. But until that day come, or so long as the churches, Liberal or Orthodox, insist upon circumscribing truth by their own definitions, and thereby cutting off the possibility of larger and better views, or of the growth of ideas, so long will there be trouble. Or, if the purpose be to make Methodists or Baptists, or Unitarians or Universalists, and to stick to their present positions, whether right or wrong, true or false, then that is quite another and a different thing from the loftier ideal of loving truth and right as such, and because they are such.

The universe is the objectivized thought of God ; and just in so far as man comes to think and externalize the thoughts of God, will the social order express the Divine ideal of truth, of liberty, of love, of life.

I.

BUT YET A CHILD OF GOD.

BY REV. J. SMITH DODGE, JR.

IN these days there is much talk of science and religion, and many souls are unbalanced. Some are inflated till they shine with rainbow splendors, presently to collapse; and some quake with fear lest the foundations of the righteous be removed. In such a case it behooves any who can to lend a hand. And since the writer of this paper has not found it difficult to enjoy and profit by the commotion and yet retain a tranquil mind, he begs leave to make visible (if he shall find the skill) the rock on which he rests, and invite whoever will to its ample security.

It would indeed be a late day to sing the praises of science. None are ignorant how it has transformed the world within a century. Political constitutions, penal codes, public health, agriculture, commerce, manufactures, war, travel, the diffusion of information, education, household economy, personal hygiene, history, literature, — whatever concerns mankind has taken new and better form from science. One may with perfect truth apply to this living energy a slight modification of Goldsmith's epitaph: "*Nullum fere genus vivendi non tetigit, nullum quod tetigit non ornavit.*"

This all know. But many do not know so clearly what science is, and how it works these wonders.

Etymologically science is knowledge; but in present fact science is exact and orderly knowledge. No new force of nature and no elementary substance of importance has been brought into the service of mankind within a century. All the lines of scientific exploration and most of the great modern achievements had been guessed and hinted or vaguely and darkly known. The miracles of science have been wrought by clarifying the old knowledge, purging out imaginations, prejudices, assumptions, and setting forth in unalloyed purity that which men knew. It has been exactly the process of the Apostle at Athens, — “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you,” — or the process of the gold-digger. A placer contains gold, and is very valuable; even a cartload of its gravel has a price. But the magic metal begins its work of promoting industries and debauching morals only when it has been collected from the mud and gravel and fused to solid bullion. Science, then, is what men know set free from all admixture and aggregated grain with grain.

This definition excludes and is meant to exclude a vast mass of deductions, explanations, prophecies, put forth by scientific men, and by the public therefore identified with science. They are generally interesting, sometimes instructive, and occasionally vastly useful as working hypotheses; but as far as they are anything else than provable and proven fact, so far they are not science. Instead, therefore, of occupying a new world remote from our familiar one, science may be said to have no objects peculiarly its own, but merely to know exactly what all the world knows vaguely.

The method of science is as close to common life as is its nature. In the old world of unscientific learning, when the philosopher had hit upon a principle or two, he retired to the monastery or the desert and elaborated within his mind conclusions and systems. The philosopher Locke was called upon to prepare in England a constitution for the colonists in the wilds of Georgia, and he made it in this way. Theology, psychology, even geography and physics, bear marks of such a method. Probably the prevailing idea of scientific research is not free from this taint. But the method of science simply is to apply well-proved knowledge to obscure facts, to the very facts which men are touching every day and somehow using, and by slow degrees to draw out of its obscurity the lurking truth. Science now and then makes a new combination or dissolves an old one, to our great advantage. But it makes no new truth, and does not aim to. It is perpetually working at the old things to extricate the precious fact within, and ally it with what is already known.

When it was suspected that the elevated railroads of New York filled the air with injurious particles of iron, an investigator did not retire to his study and apply mathematics to the impact of wheel and rail; he tied a horseshoe magnet to a string and dragged it through the gutters of Sixth Avenue, and when he examined his magnet it was covered with particles of iron. Science is forever going in this way through familiar things, and the old knowledge comes out of the process with endless shreds of new knowledge adhering by a mutual attraction. But there is more. Not only is science familiar knowledge clarified and

connected, not only does it find its daily increment by studying common things, but also its great glory depends upon the influence which it pours back into the mass of homely facts to teach them utility and clothe them with splendor. The admiration for the learned recluse who knows things undreamed of by his neighbors is dying out; but the honor of the man who knows what we know, only more soundly and broadly, grows day by day.

Science, then, is of necessity essentially humane, and instead of being the supplanter is the guardian of all that is true and useful. Nor can any power of arbitrary compulsion or fickle whim induce her to let go a single proven fact in favor of the most seductive fancies.

Now it would be strange indeed if this pervading spirit had left untouched the things of religion. Nowhere was there greater need of searching truthfulness. Here had congregated every unclean thing that infests mankind: baseless assertion, groundless fear, selfishness, cruelty, greed, superstition, fostered ignorance,—in that one tortured frame demons enough to drive whole herds of baser creatures to their ruin. And like their prototype of old they cried out against the healer. But our age has seen how the gradually broadening intelligence of mankind has, during the last fifty years, loosened the shackles and tamed the fury of creed and ecclesiastic; how without avowed break the churches have let in the light, qualified the old language, made optional much that was obligatory,—in a word, have grown in grace. All this has gradually and universally sweetened religion, like a sea-breeze after a murky day. But this is only the

beginning. Scientific inquiry has attempted to explore the penetralia, and without scruple or remorse.

Enthusiastic Delia Bacon lost her courage when at last it was actually in her power to open the tomb of Shakspeare; but any medical student would cheerfully face all the curses bard could write, for the privilege of grinning at Shakspeare's skull. In this pitiless spirit have devout souls been shocked to see that critics now not only dissect creed and history, not only challenge miracle and inspiration, but annotate the tragedy of Calvary and smile incredulous at the Easter story. And yet it must be so. He did not fear it (for it flourished in his day) who wrote, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."

It is a pertinent inquiry how far the current attacks upon received things in religion deserve the name of science. Undoubtedly a genuine scientific mind must either wholly withdraw its attention from religion, or it must examine minutely structure, foundation, soil, and substrata to the centre of the earth, if it can get so far. There is no middle course, although some famous men of science have professed one. So that to examine is thoroughly scientific. It is quite another question how far the examinations have been scientifically conducted; and yet another how closely the results reached represent exact truth. Certain it is that the popular apprehension is wholly astray which calls every vigorous attack upon the accepted doctrines of the churches "scientific." Science is no maniac, to break and rend for pleasure. She has no grudge against things which are venerable or dear to human hearts. Science is simply the truth proved, purged, and ordered.

When therefore we find a critic readjusting the entire history of Israel on the ground of his fancy and conjecture about archaic expressions and the compatibility of one obscure statement with another, and his judgment as to what a given man would have done in given circumstances, or when we find him quietly assuming that the acts called miraculous of course did not occur as they are recorded, because the laws of nature forbid, we simply remark that these are interesting speculations, but they have no claim to be called scientific. Science knows little of "cannot be" and "must be." She has exploded such assertions too often to allow others in their place.

This kind of work has constituted so much of what has been called the scientific study of religion, that it has given a great dislike of that phrase to both scientific and religious minds. And yet all truth has grown up amid such weeds; and even at the present time the advantage gained for truth among religious people by reason of these ephemeral but repeated attacks is very great and precious. It has become simply impossible to present such coarse and material views of divine things as once prevailed. Even in exposing the blunders of the attack, the defenders learn for the first time to reason about traditional things; and reason once at work seldom strikes. We may be sure, therefore, that neither will any portion of their inheritance be surrendered by the friends of religion without thorough and obstinate defence, nor will they be able to retain anything which is really vulnerable.

The situation has no element of just alarm. If only we can find a standing-place on which we may

be safe from utter loss of faith and hope, we may serenely see whatever the ages have cherished called again to vindicate itself. In a fanatical crusade of the thirteenth century against the Albigenses of southern France, the episcopal troops asked how they should know in the massacre whom to kill; and the bishop answered, "Strike, God will know His own." Though used for such an atrocious purpose, this was fundamental truth, and on it the Church may safely rest. God will know His own. Therefore we may welcome the attack, only refusing to imagine we are conquered by any but legitimate weapons. Do you say there can be no miracles? Well, prove it, and they must go. Only, *no assumptions*. Do you deny inspiration? Well, the world has thought otherwise, and the burden of proof lies with the attack. Still, prove it, and we will give it up. But mind, *no assumptions*. Do you evacuate the life of Jesus of everything not known in other human lives? You undertake a task indeed; but if you can find proof we must close our lips and assent. Only remember, here and always, we will have no "of course," or "cannot be," or "must be;" nobody's guess, or intuition, or sneer; nothing but solid proof. Whatever is finally shown to rest on that is God's.

Is then religion reduced to a struggle of evidences, and can we rest in nothing? The writer of this article, at least, is so far from believing it that all these things have been written to bring into conspicuous view the one root and everlasting assurance of religion. Proved doctrines are not religion. An inspired Bible is not religion. These disclose, establish, reveal, but they do not constitute religion. Then

what does ? For if there be an abiding substance of religion, to which doctrine and history and form are but attributes, then, however these may change, the essential thing remains. And whatever changes the scientific method may develop in the attributes, since these changes are necessarily approaches to the truth, by so much they liberate and better serve the unassailable divine essence of religion itself.

What is religion ? We need no profound and labored definition. In the simplest statement, religion is the sense of dependence on a superhuman power ; and in the most developed statement, religion is grateful trust in an Almighty Father. Both definitions are easily understood, and the latter is the true scientific development of the former. But in one of these forms, or something intermediate, religion is and has always been a constant human characteristic. From the fetich of the savage to the adoration of the saint, all conditions of man's development and surroundings have grouped themselves somehow about this nucleus. To be sure, we are told that religion is outgrown, and those who tell us fancy it is true. But any one who will make a mental census of his acquaintances and of the people of whom he has some knowledge, will find that the persons who feel no dependence on anything more powerful than man are far less numerous than the insane, the color-blind, or the one-legged. And yet to think, to distinguish colors, and to walk, are still accounted human characteristics.

Now, if the reader will compare this conception of essential religion with that aggregate of doctrines, obligations, and forms which with so many changes

has still answered to this name, he will begin to see clearly the subject of the present paper.

If a truly scientific mind attempts to trace the course of this constant element through its historical environments, how wonderful will be the scene! Where the very twilight of history dawns upon the world, he will find the Aryas among the mountains of India, joyfully singing their adoration of the open sky and the flashing thunderbolt. In the valley of the mysterious Nile he will find deities and temples of the earliest date, with intimations of a sacred wisdom which reveals to the chosen few One primal power. He will find the childlike heroes before Troy peopling the bright Ægean and the snowy ridges of Olympus with happy gods who rule the fates of men. And he will see Abraham leaving his father's house to seek a city whose builder and maker is God. Nor are these the accidents of human life. In every case all civil polity and personal conduct are grouped about the dominant conviction that man depends on a power above himself.

From these beginnings unfolds the marvellous spectacle of universal history. Empires grow great, collide, perish. Civilization shifts its form like Proteus. Barbarian hordes sweep across the fairest lands like the hurricane to devastate and to vanish. After the rage of storm the fruitful earth puts forth again bud and stem, till the ruins are first beautified and then concealed with living splendor. Little by little the race lays up its hard-earned treasure of experience, grudging like a miser to use its hoard. But through all changes man carries his indefeasible possession of religion, looking above him alike in strength and in

weakness, smitten by pestilence or borne in triumph. He grovels before his Lama in far-off Thibet, and sets the golden lustre of Athene on his Acropolis. The harsh voice of one crying in the wilderness shouts forth with brutal plainness the burden of Tyre or of Babylon, or stately priests swing their censers and chant their litanies. The forms of worship, the codes of religious law, the order of hierarchies, come and go like the waves of civil empire, but through them all something above the sky speaks to something within the heart, deep calling unto deep; and despite all grinding tyrannies, all exploded impostures, all change and disappointment, man worships still. At the touch of this great power all other forces fail. When religion bids, an empire is conquered or a throne forsaken, mercy is forgotten or revenge foregone; wealth, ease, love, ambition, fade at its coming, like the stars at dawn. Often forgotten, it is always present; often passive, it holds always the power of absolute sway.

Midway in this tumultuous scene a figure appears unique, dominant, and a master-voice sounds the keynote to all this barbarous melody. Jesus Christ organized no hierarchy, formulated no creed, left no successor. Creed and hierarchy surrounded him and opposed his work, but he had no quarrel with them; he wept when he announced their ruin. He came not to destroy the old nor to adjust the new. He came simply to be and to show once for all that indestructible bond between man and God which had always participated in the struggles of the race, but had always been overlaid and misunderstood. The Word of God, the Divine desire and purpose, the

Father's yearning call to His darkened children, had been before all worlds and absent from none, but now first was it plain and clear, — the Word was made flesh. And all this Jesus stamped upon a single phrasé, and left it for our heritage, — "Our Father." The sky god of the Aryas had been father, Osiris and Zeus had each been father, but the world had not understood what lay behind that name. Only when men had seen a perfect Son did they apprehend at last the Infinite Father.

But Christ was no sooner crucified than the old routine began again. Loving hands wrapped him in a winding sheet, embalmed him with spices, buried him in a rock. Creed, ritual, organization spun anew their tissues and built their domes. But some power, which one calls happy chance, and another Divine appointment, has kept ever since in the world the artless record of that open vision with which for three years men looked upon the Word made flesh. Since our era the world has moved as restlessly and with as varying fortunes as before, but everywhere a new element has controlled the course of things. The great drama of history has more and more acquired unity of action, the diverse characters of our race have approached, and dreams of harmony no longer seem absurd. Unformulated principles, an intangible cast of thought, have insinuated themselves into customs and statute-books. When the old order anywhere gives place to the new, it is found that an order more profound than either has conducted the change, and the new is better. Amid it all religion has put on and off her garments continually with restless vitality. The blazing martyr's coat of pitch, the

pilgrim's mantle, the monk's haircloth, the robes and jewelled tiara, the Quaker's coat and the nun's veil, cathedrals, litanies, incense, Luther before the diet, Covenanters upon the moors, Huguenots stark and bloody,—how the wondrous, awful series stretches across the ages! Yet at every moment quiet souls have forgotten all to rest and dwell within that grateful trust in an Almighty Father, which was the heart of Christ.

Our scientific explorer, recovered from this amazing survey, will observe that all the elements of the scene are still before him, still the shifting vestments and still the undying central life. And intent to find the abiding truth he will decide, "Since every formula of belief, every ordinance of observance, every ecclesiastical order which I see to-day is but the successor of many which have passed away, while all have drawn their strength from the heart leaning on God, therefore is this the abiding fact which I seek, and those are but the passing expedients which mediate between this and the world around it."

He who has attained this view will return to the strife of to-day with a tranquil mind. He will not fear that the living germ within, which guided men among the Himalayan hills, on the plains of Charan, and along the Ægean shores, having grown and strengthened through the world's vicissitudes, and received its birthright of consciousness from Nazareth, will fail before the scrutiny of any higher criticism, or the probing thrusts of science.

But to look tranquilly on, where the pulses of the world beat high, is not all the business of a man.

The method of science is as close to common life as is its nature. In the old world of unscientific learning, when the philosopher had hit upon a principle or two, he retired to the monastery or the desert and elaborated within his mind conclusions and systems. The philosopher Locke was called upon to prepare in England a constitution for the colonists in the wilds of Georgia, and he made it in this way. Theology, psychology, even geography and physics, bear marks of such a method. Probably the prevailing idea of scientific research is not free from this taint. But the method of science simply is to apply well-proved knowledge to obscure facts, to the very facts which men are touching every day and somehow using, and by slow degrees to draw out of its obscurity the lurking truth. Science now and then makes a new combination or dissolves an old one, to our great advantage. But it makes no new truth, and does not aim to. It is perpetually working at the old things to extricate the precious fact within, and ally it with what is already known.

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essential principle abstracted from its accessories; it is the aggregate of religious life as animated by this principle. We are not to examine the vital principle dissociated from the organism, but the organism vitalized by the principle. Here is an inward perception which men tell me they have, and they say it helps them to better living. Now their living I can see; and the first question is whether it is better. If it be found so, and if other and other witnesses, running through many lands and ages, bear the same testimony and exhibit the same result, then I have before me a fact as fully and as scientifically proved as that the moon affects the tides, or that the increasing altitude of the sun brings on the spring. And if I can some day add my own inward perception, and can be sure that my own life has thereby grown of the nobler sort, then I have evidence to the reality of religion as a vital power, of equal authenticity and force to the very highest which Science knows, and vastly superior to that on which many of her conclusions rest. Nor is it merely equal upon another plane. This is scientific evidence absolutely indistinguishable from such as has wrought the marvels of recent years. It is the discerning, disentangling, and accepting of a fact.

To be sure, this is not the kind of investigation current in the churches, nor is this the accepted test. But this test is alike based upon scientific method and New-Testament authority. The scientific method of investigating obscure principles and forces is to study the effects they produce; and the Scriptural rule is, "By their fruits shall ye know them." Among the many kinds of microbes now known, some are harmless and some morbid; but no criterion has

been found for separating them, except the effects which some do and others do not produce when inoculated into living bodies. And similarly among professing saints, some are noxious and some are true ; but no skill of man can any otherwise distinguish them than by observing how the spirit within each affects his daily life. Microbe or saint, "By their fruits shall ye know them."

These facts are not so remote from ordinary observation as to be with difficulty ascertained, and yet it is no railing accusation to say that the tendency of what is called the scientific study of religion has been quite away from this vital principle, and has busied itself with the accessories. Perhaps no lasting mischief would come of this ; probably it might work out its own cure. Certainly there can be but one final result. But it is painful to see the sheep of the flock led away from the succulent pastures of spring to feed on last year's husks, however daintily served up. To establish a reasonable ecclesiastical polity, to arrange public observances which shall gratify the taste and instruct the mind, to organize charities upon modern plans,—all these are admirable, and will certainly come out of the scientific study of religious agencies. But then to say, "Behold your dwelling-place!" and ask living men to cast all else away and be content, is but to shake again the weary old kaleidoscope of vestment and ritual, to look a moment at the old bits of tinsel jarred into a new adjustment which to-morrow's shake will vary once more.

No. Behind all these searchings and findings there is a continuous and abiding life. There is not an organ in the human body whose vital processes are not

under discussion and the subject of research ; but the vital processes go smoothly on in all the millions. The investigator may have toiled all day to determine the relations of sugar to the liver, but he will eat his dinner as his neighbor does, cheerfully confident that the mysterious liver within him will do its unknown duty. So while we discuss and scrutinize all the adjuncts of religion, inspiration, authority, belief, or worship, still the quickened soul rests in its Father's love, and His grace works out the nobler life.

The purpose of this paper is, more than aught else, to defend the right to be of that fluttering consciousness which in timid souls touches the hem of the Divine robe, and feels its sickness healed, but trembles lest impetuous Peter or sneering Judas should drive it from the Presence. It cannot be. If one thing is plainly written across every page of history, it is that the single heart clinging to God is stronger than Pope and Inquisition, than armies with banners, or doctors with their learning, than the chill of prisons, the sneers of friends, the stroke of the executioner, or the anguish of the cross. "I am not alone, for my Father is with me."

Let us then take part ourselves, or accord it to others, in the sharpest scrutiny of Church and creed and worship. Let us see undismayed the old go down and the new spring up. But let us remember for ourselves and for others that the vital spark is deeper than all this, and still remains. Whatever comes or goes, man has his birthright still. Perhaps a prodigal, perhaps a martyr, perhaps only a daily drudge ; but high or low, afar or near, in this world and all worlds, neither alien nor outcast, but forever the child of God.

II.

THE HISTORIC CONTEXT OF THE BIBLE.

BY REV. A. N. ALCOTT.

THE aim of this paper is not in any sense controversial. It seeks only to be helpful. The world needs help rather than polemics.

For the purposes of this paper, it will be assumed that now, after all the translations and revisions of the past two thousand years, we have at last the exact documentary context of the Bible, — the very words, if you please, of Jesus, Paul, John, Peter, and James ; of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and all the others.

What ideal has inspired all these long, varied, and unwearied labors of scholars ? To obtain for men a pure and uncorrupted text of the original Bible ; to discover if possible the veritable oracles of God ; and to get at, and render, as one of these workmen has expressed it, "the true meaning of the text," — to make "clear and express" its "import."

After all this exhausting toil, painstaking anxiety, and almost endless research, along comes Liberal Christianity, and declares in a leaflet that Christendom has been even now only partially successful in finding for men "the Word of God ;" declares that part of this printed Bible is inspired, and part uninspired ; declares in effect, when not expressly, that there are mistakes in its cosmology, cosmogony,

astronomy, geology, biology, biography, history, metaphysics, physiology, and eschatology.

The Bible's entire speculative basis is thus in effect challenged. The whole case that was supposed to be forever closed by the recent revision is abruptly reopened. Where, then, and how shall we find "the Word of God"? Infinitely more difficulty is on our hands than ever, when a Universalist Publishing House in Boston sends out a copyrighted leaflet, from which the following is taken, and circulates it among the churches:—

"We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain a revelation from God to man. Not every word in the Bible is God's message. The Apostle Paul expressly discriminates between some things which he teaches and enjoins by direction of the Holy Spirit, and some which he puts forth as personal advice (1 Cor. vii. 6); and in much that is historical or biographical, as also in much relating to the material universe, where things are spoken of as they seem, and not with scientific accuracy, it is evident that the writers were uninspired. But where special illumination is claimed, and deep things of God which man could not search out are made known, there the Scriptures contain a revelation from God (Exod. xx. 1-17; Deut. vi. 4; John vii. 16; 1 Cor. ii. 1-13; Gal. i. 11, 12; Heb. i. 1, 2; 2 Pet. i. 21)."

This statement logically involves a radical revolution of the old view of the Bible. Nay, it necessitates an entirely new theory of the Book. Moreover, it launches us afresh on the troubled sea of interpretation. How the Publishing House contrives to extri-

cate itself from the meshes of the very serious questions thus raised, it does not inform us. Its generalities are not sufficient to guide us surely through this maze. Where shall we draw the line throughout this Bible between the uninspired and fallible, and the inspired and infallible? And by what criterion shall we determine this line?

That leaflet, I repeat, necessitates an entirely new theory of this Book, both as to its origin and as to its nature.

It is the object of this paper, in order to throw some light if possible on such questions as the above, and on the origin and nature of this Book, to point out a part of the Bible which has always in theory been overlooked and left out.

1. The fact is, that when we have the documentary context of the Bible, which translators and revisers have labored for two millenniums to give us, and have it accurately, if this can now be said of it, we have not yet the whole Bible. We have only a part of it.

To illustrate. When Lord Erskine, in 1789, defended John Stockdale for alleged libel of the House of Commons, he laid down the two following thoroughly sound principles which must forever govern all true interpretation of written or printed documents. In the first place, the pamphlet alleged to contain the libel must, he declared to the jury, be construed as a whole. Parts must not be arbitrarily selected from it here and there in order to make up a case. In the second place, he affirmed, "It is proper to call your attention to how matters stood at the time of its publication, without which the author's meaning and intention cannot possibly be understood."

Here we have the two great principles of all sound interpretation of published writings, namely,—the documentary context must be taken, not in parts, but as a whole, and then this documentary context must, if we would rightly understand it, be supplemented by the context of its history,—the context of its origin, time, circumstance, and place. Judges and lawyers well understand that if they would accurately interpret a disputed statute, they must not only read it in the whole of its own light, but that they must take it back to the time of its making, and trace the reasons of its enactment, consider what evil it was proposed to remedy, and what good it was proposed to secure. Tell me why the Book we call the Bible must not, if we wish to have in hand the whole of it, and to get at its true meaning and value, be subjected to this same twofold principle of interpretation, and especially to the latter part of it. But because it has been called “the Word of God,” the latter part of this principle has, in its exegesis, been, in many respects, left wholly out of sight, as if no “Word of God” could be amenable to it, but must, in the nature of the case, be independent of it. Here is where Christendom has made its great and fatal mistake. It has not understood God nor His method, and consequently it has not yet found His whole and real Bible. Our present predicament has been unnecessarily created for us by the Protestant Reformers, who pulled up the Bible by the roots out of its historical context,—a course in which they followed the policy of the Alexandrian and African fathers in their battle with the Greek philosophers. The Protestants henceforth had no more to do, either with the

Bible's roots, or with the historic soil into which they originally struck. The printed Bible was set apart by itself as a product in all respects *sui generis*, — a product unique, single, and exceptional in its origin, and final and complete in its content and authority. No opinions were to be allowed conflicting with it. It was infallible in every part, because it was God's own personal word, valid to the end of time. Now, the objection to this theory is that it does not give us the whole Bible, and therefore not the whole and true *meaning* of the Bible. It gives us only a part of the Book, and a part which thus studied, be the documentary context never so accurate, we shall be certain defectively to construe. Hence a condition of things which has given rise to such doctrine as that contained in the leaflet. The lawyer does not find the whole meaning of a libel, or of a statute, in its words, — not in all its words. He must also study it in its origin that he may have on its language the light of its first reasons. We might as well try truly to read a star or a planet out of its place in the heavens, or a leaf out of connection with its tree, as to read the Bible truly in the way that Christendom commonly reads it.

The movement now on foot, therefore, among Liberal Christians, which, whether consciously or unconsciously, is implied and acted on in the leaflet in its estimate of the Bible, and which nothing can stop nor stay, is in exact logical line with all the translations, revisions, and versions of the Book which have gone before. It is nothing less than another revision of the Bible. It is a revision in a higher sense. It is a revision as absolutely necessary as was any other, and one which seeks identically the same ideal as all

others, namely,—the whole and original Bible as it was and is. It is a work supplementary to all that has been done on the Scriptures from the time of Origen and Jerome to the time of King James and that of our recent British and American Committees. It is a work which must be done before we can answer satisfactorily the grave questions raised by this leaflet. And when this work has been done, and done well, we shall come much nearer having the very word of God, and understand much better what it is. Scripture all along dovetails with those ages in which it was produced. It meets and matches with those ages. In order to understand either the Scripture itself or its origin and nature, we must study those ages. There is no help for it. And our age is the first one that has had the means to begin with. The requisite means were not possessed in 1611 at the time of the revival of the study of the Hebrew and Greek languages. But now the wonderful modern discoveries in history, philology, and archæology, together with the exhumation and publication to the world of all the great world-Scriptures, and the exposition of the philosophies and sciences of the Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Hindus have made known to us in quite clear and definite outline the bosom of that great world-life in the midst of which for two thousand years the Hebrews dwelt, thought, schemed, struggled, aspired, loved, prayed, and sang. We may now begin to have a glimpse of a part of the secret of their genius for religion, and to discern why the white dove of Heaven loved, as nowhere else among the nations, to hover over the terraced hills of Palestine.

2. What will the study of the historic context of

the Bible reveal to us? It will reveal to us not only the true and original meaning of the printed Bible, so that we shall not substitute in its place the modern ideas, opinions, and theories which we are constantly, though unconsciously, reading into it, but also — and this is, if anything, more important still — certain momentous and profound laws of the Bible's structure, which have not been sufficiently noted heretofore, and which will disclose the genius of the Book, as well as suggest its origin and nature. The true source of those mistaken Biblical notions of which the leaflet speaks will, moreover, clearly appear. We shall discover, more certainly than we can do otherwise, that the Old Testament is a record of reforms in religion, — of reform from polytheism to monotheism, from human sacrifice to animal sacrifice, from goddess-worship to the recognition of but a single nature in Deity; from the use of fermented wine in sacrifices, it would seem, to the use of unfermented wine; from the consolidation of Church and State to the gradual separation of Church and State; and from dependence on external ritual to secure the Divine favor, or to pay the debt of sin, to a pure, holy, obedient, and all-sufficient heart-service. In other words, one of the deepest principles in this Hebrew faith, and in the Book that records it, will be seen to be the principle of perpetual, though slow, upward growth and change. That is to say, the spiritualization of law and intellectualization in religion are vital and continuous features of this Old-Testament system; and when contrasted with the systems of surrounding peoples, they are seen to constitute its distinctive pith and marrow. And then when the New-Testament reform

comes along, it is seen to be still animated by these same distinctive principles. It dropped the vast, cumbersome, and expensive ritual of animal sacrifice, and substituted in its place the simple communion service. This was a practical application of the principle of the spiritualization of law. It introduced also purer, truer, larger, deeper conceptions of God's nature, of man's nature, and of the moral and spiritual laws, as well as a new speculative scheme of things. This was a practical application of the principle of intellectualization in religion.

There is consequently no real jar, either in doctrine, in spirit, or in substance, in passing from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The two profound and vital principles of the spiritualization of law, and of intellectualization in religion simply continue naturally to operate all changes. The outworn and the defective, the narrower and the shallower, are left behind, while essentially the same substance and spirit become revealed more and more clearly, more and more largely, just as a moon waxes toward fulness of orb. This process drops out error and darkness at the same time that it adds truth and light. Jesus is a genuine Old-Testament Hebrew when he says, "New wine"—new things of the intellect—"must be put into new bottles,"—a new ritual service. And these two principles contained wrapped up in themselves the farther idea of the soul's liberty. They made man free to search for, receive, and appropriate all the light and knowledge possible to him in the Father's universe. The Pharisees and Sadducees had been destroying these old birthright principles of the Hebrew faith by a hardened ritual and theology. The Christian move-

ment was meant to restore them, and also to let in all the new light of that day. When Jesus said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," and when Paul said, "Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty," they were only reasserting the old and deep elementary principles of the Hebrew religion. We now discover, therefore, the genius of this book we call the Bible. It is its genius, made manifest through these deep and perpetual principles of the spiritualization of law and of intellectualization in religion, never to pause and rest on any alleged ritualistic or intellectual finalities. It implies defective things in the Bible all along, as well as things which never change. The historic context makes these two principles of the Bible's structure or system absolutely certain to the student, as the light within a transparency does the letters and lines of its mottoes. One need not pause here to intimate the bearing which this discovery of the deeper structure of the Bible has on all the religious questions now in debate among us as a people, nor how it unmistakably discloses to us our Christian duties and privileges.

But the historic context farther illustrates the principle of intellectualization in the Christian religion, — a principle far-reaching and most momentous in its consequences, and which revolutionizes the old theory of the Bible's origin and nature. The historic context makes known to us in a degree the contributions of the nations toward the content of this Book, and toward its form of faith, — contributions which may be regarded, in so far as they are valid and true, as God-inspired by any one, if he so please, who in any sense believes in the Divine immanence in all souls,

and in nature's frame. As a matter of fact, it would appear that the principal of these very theories of the material universe which the leaflet regards as mistaken, were drawn in the first place from Chaldean and Persian sources. They were not the simple dreams of unschooled Hebrews looking out in untutored innocence on this shining frame of nature. The ideas of the Chaldeans, Babylonians, and Persians, however, received some modification at their hands to square them with previous Hebrew doctrines. During the three hundred years which covered the period of the captivity of the Hebrews by the Babylonians, and of the friendly empire of the Persians over them, their contact with these great peoples introduced into their faith the doctrines of angels, of immortality in the sense of resurrection to new life, of the fall, and of the destruction and regeneration of the world by fire. These doctrines, receiving some Hebrew differentiations, then came first into the records and faith of the Bible. During the three hundred years of the Macedonian or Greek empire, which displaced the Persian rule and controlled the Hebrews politically, the Hellenes profoundly affected a large section of the national mind in Alexandria, in Asia Minor, and in Palestine with the ideas of their literature, philosophy, and science. Paul and John were more than tinctured with Greek philosophical ideas, and traces of them are very apparent in their writings. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament is a monument of the influence of the Hellenes on the Hebrew mind, as the Targums are of the influence on that mind of the Chaldees. So also are those books stigmatized by the reformers of the sixteenth cen-

tury as Apocrypha, and excluded from the Bible. There was a great intellectual landslide, so to speak, begotten by the Greeks among the Hebrews; and the Alexandrian Jews, the Therapeutes, the Essenes, and Philo, Jesus, John, Paul, Peter, and James, all come within its territorial area. It is most clear from the New Testament that all these latter persons felt the intellectual breath that went forth from the sun-empurpled hills, mountains, and vales of Attica. Jesus' conception of the essential oneness of man's nature with the Divine nature is in perfect harmony with that of Plato, Zeno, Socrates, and Aristotle, though with a specific difference that lifted it to the position of a world-commanding religious faith. Paul's conception of the volumes of nature, and of human nature as being veritable writings of the finger of God, and as parts of the Christian religion's Bible, — as also his criterion of the truth, "Prove all things; hold fast the good," — if not actually derived from, were certainly much emphasized in his own mind by, these same doctrines which he came in contact with among the Greeks. The resulting product in both these instances, as well as in the work of John, was evidently the fruit of interacting influences. Then, to go back to the time of Abraham, who came out of Chaldea with a new faith; and to the time of Moses, who, it would seem, took from Egypt the *Nuk-pu-Nuk* of that people, — the "I am that I am" — and sharpening the Egyptian priestly conception into the clearest personality, set the conception of Yahwe as a gem in the bosom of Israel's national life, we find long contact of the Hebrews with two other great peoples. This circle of acquaintance and contact with

nations, if we now descend the stream of time, was to be completed by residence among the Romans, whose empire over them began about sixty-three years before Jesus' time. There is an important sense, then, in which, if we would not wilfully blind our eyes, we can say, and must say of the Hebrew race that, intellectually, it was the Son of Man. There was no great nation during its career that did not, nearly or remotely, directly or indirectly, affect it,—affect its thought, its religion, its philosophy, its life. It was hammered, too, sorely hammered by them all. Look at its location in the highway,—in the material, the intellectual, the political highway of the great nations. It was the border people between the empires of Asia on the one side, and the empires of Africa and Europe on the other side. For centuries it was the captive in turn of each one of them,—of the Egyptian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. Its learned men, elastic and plastic in mind, as history shows, communed with the great and learned in religion among all these dominating races. And even distant India was put into communication with it through the conquests of Alexander and Rome, and contributed not a little, directly and indirectly, to its doctrine of the Divine immanence. When the Roman empire came along at last, and bound the nations all up in one politically, it found among them an almost universal tongue,—the Greek. Then after the lapse of a little more than half a century Jesus came into the midst of this scene. He came into the midst of this composite life,—a religious life that had been forming from the contributions of the nations—the contribution of the Hebrew nation being included—

for two thousand years. Here, in a word, were the deposits of the thought, the intelligence, the philosophy, the life, the religion of the family of man. He grew up; he looked about him, and he read and understood the story. With the spirit of God in him, as that spirit had been in no other one of the children of men, he formulated his new religious faith, and called himself the Son of Man. His race the flower of the family of man in religion, himself the flower of his race, he seized by spiritual insight — by revelation and inspiration, we may say — on the race-thought, the race-spirit, the race-ideal, and taught all men to say, "Our Father," and all men to say, "Our Brothers." The final and race-wide covenant in religion, which he gave to mankind, — "I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts," — is the New-Testament covenant of the conscience. Here at last, therefore, was a universal religion, and a universal Scripture. And when Paul spoke of this new religious covenant, of this new law written both in a Book and also "in their mind and in their heart," and called it "the New Testament, not of the letter but of the spirit, for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life," meaning the *intellectual* letter as well as the ritualistic letter, he also gave to the world still more definitely a universal faith and a universal Scripture. The consummate race-product, Jesus and his faith, — God immanent in the race, and God immanent in him, — will, we may easily believe, lead and guide the race in religion with spiritual leadership henceforth and forevermore. When Jesus declared, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," he stood on this

mount of universal vision. There had been a revelation through the race to the race. The Word had been born of the historic travail of man, and had flowered finally in the speech and lives of Jesus, John, Paul, Peter, and James. For two thousand years had the Hebrew nation resembled in one respect Napoleon the First as the commander-in-chief of his armies, and the head of his empire. It had been the centre of reports from all nations, and from all classes and orders of men of the most marked ability. In this circumstance we have one explanation, at least, of the genius of the Hebrews for religion. Their position and relations enabled their thought to be elective, as well as creative. Their own original contributions were qualified by those of others. So that, although the recent translation and publication of the world's great Scriptures disclose the fact that the elements of their moral and spiritual laws are not only in substantial agreement one with another, but also with those of our own Bible, yet, because of this elective opportunity of the Hebrew nation's life, our own Bible, coming in as it did after all these other Bibles, and at the conclusion of this long intercourse with the nations, appears among them all as a sun among stars, as a king among subjects, as an oak among saplings, as a rose among woodland flowers. Indeed, it is like the central body of the banyan-tree among all the surrounding, connected, and vital parts of its own frame. Emphatically has it thus become true, as Max Müller has said, that he who knows only one religion knows none; just as it is true that he who knows only one language knows none. The reason in each case is the same, namely, there has been kith and kin, affinity

and contact, among all the great races. No race can be taken by itself, and studied alone in any of the main aspects of its life. In story and in development we have all been substantially one. Therefore another great disclosure is now made to us by the study of the historic context of the Bible, — by this study of the intimate connection of all the great religions and peoples, philosophies and sciences, of the ancient time, with the civilization, the language, the blood, and the religion of the nation which has produced the highest scripture-product of the world. It is the grand fact of the evolution of its religious thought. It has been a growth. It has been a developing organism of truth ever rising higher and higher, and still rising. In this fact, too, we behold the origin and nature of the Bible. And this fact of evolution which we now come on not only implicitly contains the two principles of the spiritualization of law and of intellectualization in religion, already noted as entering into the system of the Bible, but also reveals to us another and equally profound principle and feature of this Book, and one which will help us out of some of the perplexing problems sprung on us in the leaflet. It is the principle of constants and variables. The Bible is made up of constant elements and variable elements. The same truth is involved in the two preceding principles. The constants are the fundamental elements of the moral and spiritual laws, together with those objective and subjective fundamental realities and verities of religion which these elements necessarily involve and imply, — such as God's existence and personality, man's existence and immortality, and man's perpetual duty

to obey the above laws. These constants are never destroyed, and never essentially change. They are eternal and infallible facts, truths, and realities. They are directly revealed to man by God Himself through the constitution of man's nature. They are found more or less illuminated in all religions and in all Bibles. They receive their highest illumination in our own religion and in our own Bible.

Then there are the variables. These variables in Scripture are human products born of study and investigation of the constants. They are speculative. They are fallible. They may consist of single mental conceptions, or of a scheme. They are the best philosophies of things permitted by the light of the ancient time, and are not necessarily any more infallible on the subjects of revelation and of miracle than they are on the subjects of cosmogony and astronomy. These philosophies and philosophical conceptions vary among all the nations and in all the Bibles. They vary widely on many important subjects in the two great parts of our own Bible. In some Scriptures they are wildly extravagant and puerile. Speaking generally, they are far truer and purer in our own Bible than elsewhere, and prove a great advance of the human mind in scientific and philosophic grasp; yet the leaflet feels compelled to say of these purely human products even here, "In much relating to the material universe, where things are spoken of as they seem, and not with scientific accuracy [are we also to remember this on the questions of revelation and of miracle?], it is evident that the writers were uninspired." One thing is sure. It is perfectly certain that the same God did not reveal the two differ-

ent speculative ways of looking at the same things which we find in the two Testaments. A fourth profound principle of the Bible appears, then, as the corollary of this principle of constants and variables, namely, — in the *intellectual letter* of its philosophical or speculative parts. Whether these parts consist of single intellectual conceptions or of a scheme, and whether these parts are in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, it is not intended that the Bible shall be understood as inspired and infallible. This is the human side of truth. It is only the other and the Divine side of truth that is infallible. To illustrate. As men in the old time studied the star, it appeared to them at first either as a gem set in a crystalline concave, or later as a point of fire, or later still as a living being, or at last as an orb, the centre and throne of a solar system. These various theories of the star were strictly human products of human studies. But antecedently to all these studies, God, in the structure of the eye, and in the constitution of the distant body, and in the ethereal medium of light, and in the faculty of human intelligence, first directly, infallibly, impartially, and eternally revealed to men the star, as a natural fact, in a strict and scientific sense. Take another example. In the speculative study of our own planet we note a progress among men from the idea of a flat earth to that of a globe, and from the idea of this globe's central location in the vast system of the universe to that of its eccentric location in a fragment only of the vast system of the universe. This change in intellectual conception and in scheme has not caused the earth to cease to be. Increasingly, and still more vitally and profitably, it con-

cerns us. But before the first rudimentary study of it began, it was directly, infallibly, impartially, and eternally revealed in a strict and scientific sense to all men as a natural fact, through the medium of the proper God-created and God-appointed human organs. Indeed, this principle of constants and variables pervades all departments of knowledge. There is a perfect analogy in this respect between the subjects of science and the subjects of the Bible. For in a similar manner are the first facts and first truths of religion, namely, the elements of the moral and spiritual laws, and the objective and subjective realities and verities necessarily involved in and implied by these elements, directly, infallibly, impartially, and eternally — though where intelligence is of a low degree more vaguely — revealed by God to all men. And in like manner these latter realities receive, not destruction nor injury, but rather increasing confirmation and glorification, as the study, knowledge, experience, and growth of man speculatively illumines them. The leaflet incidentally confirms this view of the real origin of what is revealed in the Bible. In illustrating its statement that “where special illumination is claimed, and deep things of God which man could not search out are made known, there the Scriptures contain a revelation from God,” it cites Scriptures which teach the ten commandments, as in Exodus; the unity of God’s nature, as in Deuteronomy; the capability of the Divine law of being tested in experience, as in John; the mysterious but sufficient law of the pure heart, as in Corinthians; the Gospel as not by tradition but by intuition, as in Galatians; the speaking of God through His Son Jesus, as in Hebrews; the

prophecy as not originating in mere human will but in the spirit-moved heart of man, as in Peter's Second Epistle,—all of which references, and, I will add, every citation which it is possible for the leaflet to make from the Bible, teach nothing more than what is known to be the spontaneous, intuitive, instinctive, native dictates of man's intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature. It is found in substance in all Bibles. It is indeed a revelation from God in the direct and strict sense. Its truth is indeed infallible. It is not of man; it is of God. But it is a revelation that is found in all men and in every race in some measure; and it is "special" in any individual man, or in any race, in no other sense than that it is manifested in some men and in some races in higher or highest degree. Some souls in all the races, through difference of original capacity, have had a commanding genius for insight into moral and spiritual things, into religion's realities and verities; and so in their own God-appointed time and place have been founders of, and leaders in, religion; just as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and many others, have been founders of, and leaders in, science; or as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hamilton, and many others, have been founders of, and leaders in, philosophy; or as Coke, Hale, Blackstone, Kent, Story, and many others, have been founders of, and leaders in, the science of law. In this perfectly natural sense there is such a thing as "special" revelation of, or "special" illumination as to, the truths of religion. But the great prophets, whatever their race, came by their knowledge, however infallible it may be, in no other way essentially than we come by ours.

Therefore, these four principles of the spiritualization of law, and of intellectualization in religion, and of constants and variables in the Scripture-content, and of directly revealed and infallible elements of religion, with the accompanying human, fallible, speculative conceptions and schemes of these elements, which the study of the historic context of the Bible makes manifest to us, multiply the value of the Book a thousand-fold, not only by disclosing its deeper system and structure, and not only by restoring to us the whole original and true Bible, so that we may get at the right meaning of the Bible, but also by placing it wholly on a scientific foundation. Henceforth it will be just as indestructible as any other Divine product of nature is. God, the immanent and infinite, will be found in it; and man, the fallible and finite.

8. We are not yet quite through with the historic context. It will be at once discerned how the four fundamental structural principles of the Bible, which have now been elucidated, connect it vitally with the whole web, not only of past, but of present human life. We have not yet our whole Bible, because we have not yet that whole which is implied in the historic context of it.

How does this leaflet know that there are mistakes in the printed Bible? It makes a very bold statement. Has not this printed Book been considered in all its parts and features as infallible by Christendom for centuries? How did the authors and publishers of the leaflet know that it is filled with mistakes? Were they inspired? Did God make a "special revelation" to them of this fact? Did He give them a "special illumination," as against the convictions of all Chris-

tendom except their own little section of it? How do they know what they affirm? Must we answer that they know it by outside evidence? Then whence this outside evidence, by which men are warranted in judging the reliability of a so-called Divine volume? Must it be answered that they know it, and can only know it, because of another part of this very Bible which it has been the usage of Christendom to overlook and ignore, but which is indisputably given to us, not only in the law of Biblical evolution already noted, but also by this printed Bible's own express terms? What is this other part of the Bible? *It is the context of the living Word within and without man.* It is that part of it which was instrumental in its original production, and in its continual evolution. It is the volume of all Nature on the one hand, and the volume of all human nature on the other. Paul expressly gives this part of the Bible to us. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." That declaration made all the volume of Nature a part of Christian Scripture forevermore. The Psalmist had sung of it and had affirmed God's truth in it. Solomon had studied it. God Himself had been represented as arguing exclusively from it to convince Job of His own existence and infinitude. Again, "That which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them." "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." That declaration

made the whole volume of human nature a part of Christian Scripture forevermore. It is an affirmation of the universal revelation to man of the fundamental elements of religion. This was not a new part of Scripture, for the Proverbs had said, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord;" Moses had said, "The word is very nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest hear it and do it;" and the writer of Job had said, "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Now, if it be our true ideal to possess the whole of the original Bible as it was and is, this part of the Bible must, in our practice, be restored to its place in the Book. This part of the Bible is rooted, not only in the historic, but also, as we now see, in the documentary context of the Book. It is an utter impossibility on any theory to get rid of it without rudely violating the integrity of the volume. The warrant, and the only warrant which the leaflet has, for pronouncing this printed Bible either accurate or inaccurate, in whole or in part, is the light derived by its framers from that part of the Bible which the Old-Testament prophets in practice, and Jesus in practice and principle, and Paul by express charter, have made a portion of Christian Scripture; namely, the context of the living Word. The significance of this part of the Scripture is this,—the sons of God have by eternal Biblical charter been given the freedom of the Father's house, and it is their Christian duty to use it. And that they may not use it unwisely and fancifully, Paul's scientific principle has been given them for an infallible guide: "Prove all things; hold fast the good." God is immanent in the

sons, and God is immanent in the house. He speaks now and here. His infinite personality and truth shine presently through the universe at every pore. The printed Bible is, in all its speculative and philosophical parts, whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, amenable to this present light in virtue of its own constitutive principles, as well as by its own express terms and practice. This context of the living Word becomes vitally and organically connected with the documentary context, therefore. It is the present or living historic context. It indissolubly joins the living mind and beating heart of to-day, together with their wide knowledge and grand sentiments, with this printed Bible, as necessary part and parcel of it. It ever has been and ever shall be one with it. It must never be divorced from it. The masonry of the printed Bible, so to speak, which it is now the task of Liberal Christianity by a fresh revision to restore, is at the near end built into ourselves. It had two origins, — its canonical and its prophetic one. Our canonical Old Testament came out of the Hebrew religious consciousness of Ezra and the men of the great synagogue. The books which were stigmatized as Apocrypha by the reformers, in their free use of the living historic context, but which had been counted as sacred Scripture for sixteen hundred years, and are still so counted by the Church of Rome, came out of the Hellenized Hebrew religious consciousness. Our canonical New Testament came out of the Christian religious consciousness of church councils, which sifted and sifted sacred writings, and in the course of their work left out gospels and epistles. One might almost say that our printed Bible had another origin in

the translators, chapter-makers, versifiers, revisers, and authors of titles and headlines, all of whom have contrived with more or less success to conceal from our eyes for ages the pure documentary original. And we are compelled, moreover, to take our own reason into the understanding of every verse of Scripture. The result is necessarily a compound of self and of another, on any theory. A judge who interprets the law necessarily makes a part of it. In a degree he is a legislator, and there is no possible help for it; just as in all canonical councils, translations, and revisions the sense of the scholar is inevitably made part of the product. The living Biblical context will not and cannot down. And the fact that the real and whole Bible is thus a living organism of truth, *and not a dead one*, forbids the meat-axe method of analyzing the printed Book into chapters, verses, titles, and headlines, not more than it does the meat-axe process of cutting the documentary context out of the world's history and life, and considering it apart and complete and final by itself. We might as well thus cut out the Vedas, or the Avesta, or the Tripitaka, or Homer, and Hesiod, and Virgil, and consider any one of these world-products as by itself final and complete. Our analysis should be rather that of the scalpel, and this analysis will reveal to us the living, organic whole.

The nature of the prophetic original of the printed Bible has already been indicated.

When the leaflet, therefore, in its estimate of the Bible, goes by the enlightened modern Christian consciousness, it does not go, for its warrant and authority, either outside of Christianity or outside of the

Bible. And if now, in the light of this living context, we are constrained to reconceive, in a measure, revelation, miracle, nature, God, man, destiny, as well as cosmogony, astronomy, geology, biology, and history, as taught in the printed Bible, we shall no more go outside the Bible for our warrant and authority than the leaflet does.

This new revision of the Bible, therefore, which we now have on our hands, will restore to us its overlooked and forgotten parts. We are as much entitled, in the name of truth, to these parts as Lord Erskine was to the libel's context of time, circumstance, and place. And in the light of these restored parts, it will be seen, not only that the printed Bible does not teach many things which it has been supposed to teach, but also that all the speculative things which it does teach are open to revision in the best light of the Christian consciousness of our own time.

Respecting this new revision of the Bible, the words of Bishop Ellicott which he uttered concerning its recent documentary revision are to be commended to the attention of all Liberal Christians. Putting the question whether it would be right to join those who opposed all revision, he answered: "God forbid. . . . It is vain to cheat our own souls with the thought that these errors (in the Authorized Version) are either insignificant or imaginary. There are errors, there are inaccuracies, there are misconceptions, there are obscurities; and that man, who, after being in any degree satisfied of this, permits himself to lean to the counsels of a timid or popular obstructiveness, or who, intellectually unable to test the truth of these allegations, nevertheless permits himself to deny them, will

have to sustain the tremendous charge of having dealt deceitfully with the inviolable word of God." And the words of Edward Hayes Plumptre, spoken of the recent documentary revision, are also to be commended to their attention, and they apply with tenfold more force to the revision which we now need so sorely, than they did to the other one: "It is clear on principle that no revision ought to ignore the results of the textual criticism of the last hundred years [what shall we say, then, of the accumulated scientific knowledge of the last hundred years?]. To shrink from noticing any variation, to go on printing as the inspired Word that which there is a preponderant reason for believing to be an interpolation or a mistake, is neither honest nor reverential [is it any more so to perpetuate a mistaken theory of revelation or of miracle?]. To do so for the sake of greater edification, is simply to offer to God the unclean sacrifice of a lie."

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III.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF OPINION CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURES.

BY REV. HENRY BLANCHARD.

IT is not difficult for a good listener in the intellectual world to hear the sounds of crashing systems of opinion concerning the Scriptures. In Germany, Holland, Scotland, England, and America the old systems of thought are falling. But the listener can hear other sounds. New systems are rising. The sounds of many workers are heard as they build up, slowly and surely, new systems of opinion concerning the Scriptures. These, indeed, converge so much toward one direction, that we might say "system" instead of "systems." There may well be rejoicing in destruction and in construction. Replacement follows swiftly on displacement. The new edifice of thought is grander than the old.

In this good work of reconstruction, the Universalist denomination should have a part. Its divinity schools should be workshops in which the professors should be leaders. The clergy should study the facts of destruction of old opinions and the upbuilding of the new. The laity should be taught, and should be eager to be taught. There are abundant facts to show that very many men and women are ready to hear. They are sometimes startled by certain statements at first; but they speedily see that "new views" only

ennoble the Scriptures. For these, I would gladly report in these pages something of the great work done by the foremost scholars of the world. I would gladly have the assistance of my brother clergymen. Many of these are fellow-students. Many are proclaiming the results of scholarship in quiet, persuasive way. But some are not meeting the demands of the hour. The question precedent to all others is, "What is the Bible?" We must be ready to answer this out of fulness of knowledge.

Is it not true that many clergymen, after passing a certain age, do not interest themselves in the new questions of the day? Are they not content with the opinions with which they left their school, or which they formed in their early ministry? It is certain that to be fresh and invigorating to their hearers, they must vivify themselves by draughts from the copious fountains of knowledge coming from Kuenen and Wellhausen and Martineau and Farrar and Ladd. Then can they be young in feeling and thought, even when their years are many. The older, indeed, the better for service; then can they speak with power.

I submit the statements of this article, then, to the candid and careful consideration of all its readers, young and old, lay and clerical. The reconstruction of opinion concerning the Scriptures moves in these directions:—

1. The Scriptures are literature, and not the "Word of God."
2. They contain the words of inspired men, but are not themselves inspired.
3. They are the matchless writings of the world.
4. They are full of power to inspire to noble living.

1. By literature is meant the literary records produced by the activity of the human mind. It is seen that it is natural to recite the deeds of ancestors and heroes, to give expression to deep feeling as the wonder of the universe is felt, to embody in pithy sayings the wisdom of the wise, to exaggerate the claims of great leaders. The writings of the Old and New Testaments came into being as all other literature has done, — in obedience to the natural desire to express feeling and record deeds.

We see, indeed, that no man can mark the dividing line between the human and the divine. "My trouble is," said a young thinker to me years ago, "not that I do not believe in God, but that I do not believe in anything else." It is easy to have this trouble. That we live and move and have our being in God is our profoundest feeling. Where our activity is separate from the divine no one can say; but in ordinary language, we have to say that man does some things, and God does others. The production of the Scriptures is man's work; they are literature.

Years ago I said to an honored father in Israel, "You ought to see and appreciate the position of your younger brethren with regard to the Scriptures. I believe in providential, inspired men. They show themselves such, not merely by the truth they announce, but also by their powers of leadership; they are the prophets. Others write down what they did or said; these are the scribes. The difference between the two classes is the difference between the orator and the reporter, between the poet and the type-setter." I say that now, and with even stronger emphasis. I say

the Scriptures are chiefly the work of the scribes, and not of the prophets. They are human compositions; they are literature. What kind of literature, the scholars are well agreed upon. These writings were written chiefly by unknown authors, are often very composite in their structure, are of very varying value, are in some instances — for example, the Song of Solomon — unworthy of a place among “sacred Scriptures.” It is now agreed that Moses did not write the Pentateuch; that the Psalms have many authors; that Proverbs came from many wise men; that Daniel is of very late origin; that Esther is irreligious; that Jonah is an allegory. I should like to make many quotations from many books, some of which I have already named; but as I am writing chiefly for the laity, I will quote only, throughout this article, from the excellent book of Prof. George T. Ladd, D.D., entitled “What is the Bible?” Dr. Ladd is Professor of Philosophy in Yale University. As such he is instructor of the divinity students connected with that institution of learning. He wrote several years ago an exhaustive work on “The Doctrine of Sacred Scriptures.” “What is the Bible?” is, practically, a compend of this prepared for the use of laymen. I commend it very warmly to all my readers for its scholarship, its candor, and its courage. On page 299 he says: —

“The result has been, — and to say this is only to state a matter of fact, — that with very few exceptions anywhere, and with almost no exceptions in those places where the Old Testament is studied with most freedom and breadth of learning, the whole world of scholars has abandoned the ancient tradition that the Pentateuch,

in any such form as we now have it, was the work of Moses."

On page 302 he says :—

"It is all the while [Biblical criticism] growing more nearly unanimous against the traditional view that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. This agreement is the more remarkable because it is shared in by critics of all manner of religious attitudes towards Old Testament revelation. It is also an agreement that has been gradually *forced by the evidence* upon the minds of many scholars who formerly controverted it."

I could fortify every other one of my declarations by other quotations from this admirable little book. Let us look, then, at this literature. See its magnificent beginning in the opening words of Genesis. Here we have a hymn, probably used in early worship, and not a statement of an inspired penman to tell us how the world was made. Said a witty Catholic theologian, "The Bible is to teach us how to go to heaven, and not how the heavens go." Then we have the story of man's creation, of Eve, of the serpent, of the apple, of the expulsion from Eden. Surely, we can see for ourselves, without help of scholars, that this is indeed only "a story." Then we have the stories of Cain and Abel, the Tower of Babel, the flood, and all the rest.

It is agreed now among scholars that all these early accounts of Genesis are ancient "folk-lore," long handed down in oral tradition, and finally embedded in documents which furnished the materials for this book. That Genesis is a very composite book, all scholars teach. The two main documents from

which its accounts are drawn are easily shown. Then we have the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Joseph and his brethren. Again, we have only literature,—stories. What basis of fact underlies all these, no scholar can now determine. We read of Moses and of Joshua, of Samuel and of Saul and David. Again, we have only literature,—stories, containing without doubt solid historical fact, but set in a mass of legend. With the great prophets of the eighth century B. C., the scholars agree we are standing on solid historical ground. What magnificent literature now in the Isaiahs,—early and late,—in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel! What magnificent literature in Psalms, in Job,—matchless poetry, indeed, according to James Anthony Froude,—in Habakkuk, in Micah! Opening the New Testament, we come to other noble literature. Here are the four Gospels,—“children of the memory,” said Beecher,—the written tradition based upon oral tradition, whereon many worked, as the Gospel of Luke so forcibly tells us. What simplicity, what candor, what graphic power there are in these! Let my readers study Farrar’s “Messages of the Books” to see new beauty and feel new power in these compositions. Compositions, indeed, they are,—composite from many an oral story or loving epistle,—and yet full of power to show us the great soul of whom they tell the story!

We marvel at the account of the miraculous birth, the water changed to wine, the multitude fed by loaves and fishes, the blasted fig-tree, the dead coming out of graves, but we need not be repelled. These Gospels, too, are literature; they reflect the ideas of the times. They could hardly be accounted historical,

if they did not contain stories accepted in the first century as true, but rejected by us to-day.

We read the book called "The Acts of the Apostles;" we find it full of interest. We see the "church" in the day of Pentecost; we behold Stephen arraigned, and hear his address, and shudder at his death; we see the persecutor Saul, the event on the Damascus road, the retreat in Arabia, the life at Antioch, the missionary journeys, the conference at Jerusalem, the scene at Athens, the heroism of the shipwreck, the imprisonment at Rome. Here we have literature again,—in large measure, doubtless, reliable history.

We read the epistles of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. How we are moved by them, as we take in their meaning, as we feel the heart-beats beneath the words! What a letter that is to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Ephesians! What a strain of eloquence in the seventh of Romans, the thirteenth of First Corinthians! We read all the rest, — of Peter, of John, of James, of Jude, of the unknown author of Hebrews. We marvel at Revelation and try to understand it.

From Genesis to Revelation we have been reading literature, and not "the Word of God." The scholars are agreed that however powerful, truthful, helping, these writings are they came from man and not from God.

"In any legitimate meaning of the terms, it is not truly catholic doctrine to say that the Bible is the Word of God." So says Professor Ladd, on page 71 of "What is the Bible?" Still the phrase is repeated,—repeated by Liberal as well as by Evangelical,

—“Word of God;” but the arguments which upheld it are shown to be unsound, — the old dogma crashes into ruin. We need not be amazed that the work of man was called the Word of God. The success of Luther in dethroning the Roman Church in the minds of his countrymen prepared the way. It is natural for mankind to revere something. Reverence for the Church was destroyed; reverence for the Book took its place.

The most unreasonable and unscholarly statements concerning the Scriptures were uttered in post-Reformation days. Luther and Calvin might easily horrify the advocates of later days. As Chrysostom criticised Paul, — believed that the apostle “did not enjoy grace,” — so Luther thought James’s epistle “an epistle of straw,” and the Revelation of no worth; and Calvin did not think that Paul was the author of Hebrews, or Peter of the book called Second Peter, and he denounced Revelation as unintelligible, and forbade the pastors of Geneva to attempt to interpret it.

Later theologians, however, built up a theory. The Bible was indeed the Word of God. They taught that in the case of every book, passage, word, and letter, God gave impulse to write, — suggested subject-matter, suggested the very words in which this should be stated. Is it wonderful that such statements produced a Bolingbroke, a Voltaire, a Tom Paine? Shattered is the theory now. Evangelical and Liberal unite in deriding it. The Scriptures are literature, — very glorious, but not the word of God.

2. They contain the words of inspired men, but are not themselves inspired.

It is the strong consensus of scholars that there is

inspiration of God given to men, but not accorded to writings.

Says Professor Ladd, in "What is the Bible?" (page 432), —

"Inspiration, in the primary and only strictly appropriate meaning of the word, applies to persons and to persons only. It is in a secondary and somewhat loose meaning of the word that it can be applied to a writing, or to a collection of writings into one or more volumes. . . . The Bible itself, from the first verse in Genesis to the last verse in Revelation, does not contain a single word to encourage the opinion that any special kind of inspiration was given to its writers, in the act of writing, or to qualify them for writing. On the contrary, everything which the Bible actually does say discourages such an opinion. Sacred Scripture is inspired, in the specific meaning of the term, so far as — and only so far as — it is the product of the men of revelation."

Inspiration and revelation, — what is the meaning of those words to-day?

By inspiration is meant the influence of the Spirit of God on the spirit of man. It vivifies, it clarifies; it enables man to see as otherwise he could not. Revelation is what he sees under inspiration.

Surely we must believe in both, — in inspiration and revelation. For we believe in God, — the Infinite Life, and therefore the Infinite Mind, Will, Love. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. He is above all, and through all, and in us all. The Infinite Mind speaks to the finite mind. Surely this is inevitable for him who thinks. Surely he must believe that man, under this help, can see what otherwise would be hidden, — unrevealed.

Conversing with honored John Greenleaf Whittier, I said, "The very corner-stone of all my theology is the witness of the Spirit." Through all the years that have passed away since I sat and talked with him in his cottage at Amesbury, my conviction has only deepened and grown holier and more satisfying, more consoling, more inspiring. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." These were the great words of Paul. These have reverberated through millions of souls since then to give them peace and joy and strength. I believe them. I believe them with all my mind and soul.

The science of the day only confirms the faith. The philosophy of to-day confirms it. "Christian consciousness" attests it.

We examine, then, the words of the Scriptures. We study the facts of history. As result we see that the world has moved forward in thought, in love, in worship, in achievement, under the leadership of great men. We do not need to have the Carlylean worship of men of might. But he who knows of Moses, Solon, Plato, Paul, Augustine, Charlemagne, Hildebrand, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Ballou, Channing, Parker, Emerson, Mill, Spencer, knows that great men have been the instruments of the progress of mankind.

We must feel that the extraordinary man has extraordinary inspiration. Since no child of God is left without divine breathing, we must feel that he who stands above the multitude to instruct, to command, to lead, to quicken with hope and courage, is, indeed, the man of God,—the inspired son.

Some of these are able to see truth unseen by their fellow-men. They see spiritual laws, intellectual laws, physical laws, and reveal them to their brethren. I can read history in no other way than as confirming this position. Take, then, the Scriptures in hand. Passing by earlier parts, wherein "folk-lore legends" are enshrined, we speedily come to Moses, the man of God. What is legend, what is history, no man can magisterially declare. But all students agree that he was leader and lawgiver, — the founder of the commonwealth of Israel. Deducting what each one shall feel compelled to do from the sum of the statements, enough remains to make us feel that here was a strong son of God, a leader to whom God gave courage, fortitude, power, truth, to enable him to do his great work, — the fitting of slaves to be free men and their descendants builders of the nation of Israel.

Take each great character in turn, — the soldier, Joshua; the judges, — Saul, Samuel, David, Solomon, — and we find with each some word spoken and some deed done which compels admission that God was using these. Take Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and all the company of prophets. Read their words, whether in making men turn to God, or abhor sin, or believe in final victory in the midst of ruin and exile, and we must feel that there is a power working with them which is not their own, — the power of Almighty God. So teach the great scholars of the day. Reconstruction of opinion concerning the Scriptures holds fast the doctrine that inspiration is given to *men*. But the moment we turn to examine the Scriptures, and through history study the fortunes

of all *writings*, we see that inspiration is not given to Scriptures of any nation. Of course, they *contain* inspired words ; for since the lawgiver, the leader, the prophet, the psalmist, the wise man, the apostle, the Christ, were inspired by God, some word has been recorded which has come, mediately, from the Infinite.

It is clearly seen, however, that inspiration does not involve infallibility. Herein has been great mistake in the past, — the identifying of infallibility with inspiration. Herein is one of the chief emphases of modern scholarship. Inspiration may be given without assuming infallibility.

“ Not a single claim to the ability to write *errorless* Scripture, whether with respect to historical, linguistic, geographical, or ethical contents of truth, exists in all the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. . . . In all inspiration, the exact place where the divine meets the human and is limited by it, as well as the precise mode of the operation of the Spirit, remains concealed and mysterious. But this does not render inspiration irrational, much less incredible.”

We may well believe in the inspiration of Moses, and Isaiah, and Paul, and Jesus above all, without claiming that their inspiration saved them from all obscuring influences of their times, their education, their human limitations. Evidently Paul felt that he was not always helped by the Spirit of God. He would speak sometimes in his own name, and not in that of his Heavenly Father. Even if Jesus had said aught which we must reject to-day, — which I do not admit, — yet we can still believe that the words which he spake were given to him by God.

Inspiration is not infallibility. That is the emphatic teaching of reconstructed opinion concerning the Scriptures.

It is seen, also, that these books of the Old and New Testaments are made up from far earlier documents which have utterly perished. Whether we read Genesis or Deuteronomy, Chronicles or Kings, we are reading books made up from earlier books. *In their present shape*, therefore, many of these are of comparatively recent date. Who first sang of creation or told of Eden; who first recited the story of Babel or the flood; who first wrote of burning bush and destroying angel, of the voice on the mount and the flaming fire, of golden calf and brazen serpent, of Moses' blessings and of his lonely death, — no one can tell. These dramatic recitals were long held in oral tradition; father recited to son, and son to son, through many a generation. Held in memory for years, when they were recorded in writing no history can tell. It is a yet unsolved problem when writing began.

So of Gideon and Deborah and Samson, the record was in men's minds long before it was in material for writing. So many a proverb passed from mouth to mouth long before ascribed to Solomon. So many a psalm was breathed under full moon or in the noise of tempest before it was believed to be written by David.

This composite nature, instead of unity, of documents is one of the marked and important notes in reconstruction of opinion. It helps to solve many a difficulty, before which the old opinion was powerless.

It is agreed, also, that we cannot tell when the Scriptures of the Old Testament were first regarded as sacred, and that the acceptance of the Scriptures of the New as sacred was of gradual growth. Legend has been busy about a great council which made canonical the Old Testament. Effort has been expended to mark an hour when the New became sacred. We cannot tell. We can see only the natural rising into acceptance of the best. And yet regret must be felt that the Apocrypha was not thus received. The student of its books sees how "inspired," too, they are. In it he reads: "God created man to be immortal, and made him an image of his own eternity." He cannot match for grandeur any other word in the canonical writings. He reads the thrilling story of Judas Maccabæus, and wishes it were in "sacred Scripture." Nay, for many of us, most of these writings are as sacred as aught we read in all the books of Israel.

A sharp discrimination between the "authority" of the Old and the New Testaments is being made with incisive power. Once, the Christian was taught that God commanded him through the Scriptures of the Jews as fully as by the Scriptures of the Christian. Moses was to be obeyed as well as Christ. History, in lurid letters, tells us the results. Slavery, witchcraft, persecution, tyranny, have all been entrenched in the letter of the Old Testament. Everywhere now it is seen that we may read the Old Testament for instruction, but that we are to go to Christ for command and guidance. What vast, immeasurable change for good in this opinion of to-day!

It is seen, also, that "inspiration" is given by God

to men in the nineteenth century as well as in the first of our era, or in the fifteenth before it.

"The histories of nations," said Carlyle, "are their Bibles." The words contain a profound truth. I hold that to Israel God gave the great office of teaching universal religion. While Greece had for providential mission the teaching of beauty, and Rome that of order, to Israel, in the great drama of humanity, was given the leadership in religion. I bow down before her prophets as the greatest of the servants of God. I bow down before the Christ as the greatest of the greatest. But I join with those who believe that God has given providential mission to America as well as to Israel; that God has been with her leaders—her Washington and Lincoln—inspiring, revealing; and that He will be with leaders in ages to come.

Nothing is clearer, it seems to me, in the reconstruction of opinion than this belief in universal inspiration. It may differ as to its objects; it may largely differ in degree; but it is believed that it is always the same in kind, and that bard and prophet, founder of commonwealths, discoverer of mighty forces in Nature, inventor of wondrous mechanism, are all helped by inspiration of God.

3. They are the matchless writings of the world. Of course, this can be said of them only as a whole. But comparing them as a whole with other sacred Scriptures as a whole, we find that they are immeasurably above them. And in comparing parts with parts of these other revered writings, they are incomparably sublimer.

Once it was thought that there were no other

"sacred Scriptures." The wisdom of Confucius, the writings of India and Persia, the words of Socrates and Plato, were only literature. Now it is clearly seen that the words revered by millions of men who are not Jews nor Christians have also their inspiration. For a while the new knowledge seemed to threaten degradation for our Scriptures, but only for a while. The scholars who know the most concerning other writings are the ones who are most emphatic in declaring the unapproached grandeur of the Old and New Testaments.

It is no difficult task to decide this matter. Let any one take up the various compends of all sacred Scriptures which are to be found to-day made by enthusiastic admirers of these other writings; let him compare the words taken from the Old and New Testaments with those taken from these other writings, and he will soon feel the greatness of the Scriptures.

4. They are full of power to inspire to noble living. These writings are full of the consciousness of God. No others can compare with them in this respect. This consciousness makes them inspiring to noble living; for he who can say, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me," is nobly living.

The students of these marvellous human compositions — these remains of Jewish and Christian literature — feel profoundly this power proceeding from these writings to their souls. They need no "council" to declare that as a whole they are "inspired." They need no exact philosophical definition of what inspiration is. They need no "cloud of witnesses" to declare that these books are "sacred." The more

they know them the less impatient are they with the old phrase, "the Word of God." They know that they are not, but they do not wonder that they were so called. They feel their power to lift them into communion with God. They can read, therefore, legend, myth, miracle, without disturbance. Through all attempts of writers of original documents, or of compilers of present books, to tell of creation, origin of man, the entrance of evil into the world, of patriarch, lawgiver, prophet, apostle, Christ, or New Jerusalem, they feel the deep underlying consciousness of Him who made all things, and who has created man in His image.

There was no voice of God on Mount Sinai to be heard by outward ear, but they see how the story shows the writer's consciousness of God. There was no rising up of Jordan's waters to let Joshua's host pass through, nor fall of Jericho's walls at the sound of priestly trumpets. What matter? They who recited, or they who afterward recorded, felt God so near, so mighty, that they could believe that He lifted waters and caused walls to crash.

There was no miraculous birth at Bethlehem, nor coming out of graves, when the glorious sufferer died upon the cross. What matter? They who wrote felt God near, — believed in His almighty power. And as we read, rejecting statement of fact, we too are lifted into fellowship with God as we feel the deep faith of those who wrote. And as we turn from story which we cannot accept, to word of prophet or apostle, or the Christ, whose truth we do accept, how do we feel power streaming from appeal, from prayer, from sayings, to make us thrill with consciousness of

the One God and Father who is above all and through all and in us all,—in whom we live and move and have our being. To him who is familiar with these matchless writings, what words from Isaiah and Micah, from Psalm and Job, from epistle and gospel, ring in his mind, and lift him into joyful communion with the Eternal! He *knows* what power they hold to inspire to noble living.

I rejoice, then, in this reconstruction of opinion concerning the Scriptures which is now going on so rapidly, and which is producing such excellent results. I look to see through this reconstruction two other reconstructions, — of the Church and of society.

With the abandonment of the old opinion concerning the Scriptures, the unreasonable dogmas of the Trinity, of sacrificial atonement, of everlasting punishment will be overthrown. Then shall come unity among all Christians through the results of scholarship, as this shows us what the Scriptures really are, and what is the history of these repellent doctrines. Then Christ shall be seen as greatest of men, but not God, nor God-Man. Then shall the universe shine resplendently as the home of a finally glorified family of mankind. Then shall "the Devil and all his angels" forever disappear. Union shall bring power to the Church universal. The reconstructed Church will create a reconstructed society. Instead of emphasis on creed, we shall have emphasis on character and conduct. Instead of wasted efforts, we shall have concentration to bring men to love of God and man. Greed, ambition, indifference, indolence, lust, shall be attacked by a united Church, demanding that every one who nameth the name of Christ shall depart from

iniquity; that men shall be judged by their fruits. Ignorance shall be enlightened, sorrow shall be comforted, and worship of God as spirit shall be enkindled. The soul of man shall be revered. It shall sit in judgment on Scriptures and councils and creeds, and man's "natural piety" shall rejoice in love and reverence and obedience toward God, and in fellowship with and service to the whole family of mankind. For these results the believers in the Scriptures, who hold reconstructed opinions, can work and pray. They see that these wondrous writings will be not the less revered in days to come, but more. They feel the depth of the meaning and the grandeur of the words, the Scriptures *are the words of men containing the words of God.*

IV.

CONTINUITY OF RELIGION.

BY E. L. REXFORD, D. D.

CLAUDE LORRAINE — himself a distinguished artist — once said that the most important thing for a landscape painter to know is, where to sit down. He evidently meant that the artist should seek out the one felicitous point of observation before which the various lines and figures of the scene he would reproduce should combine in the most significant and complete expression. No one object in the landscape should be allowed to distort or conceal another, but each and all should have full and fair recognition. Thus and thus only could the artist hope to represent faithfully what might exist before him.

An equal appreciation of signal advantages in the task proposed would greatly facilitate the work of any person who should assume to speak or write concerning *religion*, as that supreme interest appears in the history of mankind. Where to sit down before this sublime scene which has lingered through all ages in the vision of the world is a question of transcendent importance. The privilege of choosing a determining point of outlook would be greatly prized by any artist in the domain of physical nature, and he would regard almost any amount of labor and fatigue as amply compensated, if all this weariness did but

result in giving him the organic seat before which the entire imagery should appear in enchanting unity.

But while such enthusiasm characterizes the genius that would depict the Divine thought as traceable in mountains and valleys, forests and streams, I think I hazard nothing of the truth when I say that the point of observation commanding the broadest expanse of the religious field has never been an object of unwearied or even important search on the part of the great majority of those who have assumed to be the interpreters of religion. It may be said with entire faithfulness to the truth, I think, that the most representative observation points have been avoided, and the retreats of partisan or class environments have been chosen instead.

Happily, however, there is a growing number of men in these later days — prominent among whom appears such an one as Professor Max Müller — who have toiled, and who are still toiling, very industriously before this mightiest spectacle in the mighty works of God, and year after year they are transferring to their living canvas the significant and wonderfully impressive features of an adoring world. Humanity, beneath the hands of these reverent artists, is seen to be a worshipping humanity; and more ennobling still, if that were possible, it is seen ever to have been a worshipping humanity. These noble seers and prophets of the religious sense have not chosen to sit down in a corner that so they might engage their energies with the meagre fortunes and activities of a mere sect or party. They have realized, painfully enough, from the Divine image in man broken and defaced by the traditional methods of treatment, that the most signal

features of the world's religious life would be hopelessly concealed from men occupying some secluded province. And knowing the limitations and the poverty of such a survey they have passed out to a more central and commanding place, whence they are privileged to look before and after and on either side. They have passed upward from the unilluminated retreats so dear to the lovers of the brief spaces, to the summit fact of the essential religiousness of man's nature; and from that supreme elevation they are studying the problems of life and religion and Providence, anxious most of all to know the truth of things and thus to deepen the faith and broaden the charities of mankind. These are the only purposes that can inspire the more generous and comprehensive interpreters of religion.

These men have chosen this seat with reverent wisdom, as if the beseeching and worshipping faces of the world were all turned toward them, asking that a justice long delayed may be granted them in the august names of fatherhood and of brotherhood,—a justice granted to all who have worshipped in the best light they have ever known. These men have chosen their place of vision as by the persuasion of the Infinite Heart, and we shall do well if we diligently seek out the sources of their catholicity of judgment and of sympathy and refresh ourselves with the same helpful spirit. They are certainly accomplishing a much-needed task in behalf of a living faith. It requires no extraordinary degree of perception to see that such a faith has been waning among the intelligent classes; and it must wane still more if it be not nourished from the resources of a larger field.

It would be a cause for profound regret that this great subject of religion should be studied from such inadequate positions as it has been, did we not remember that certain great investigations cannot be successfully prosecuted before their time. Every critical and largely representative problem has its age which cannot be greatly forced. "Thou preparest them corn when Thou hast so provided for it," says the great poet of Israel; and it is by this preparatory phase of Providence repeated in its every province that the great problems are brought before the children of men, age after age. Each generation has its characteristic work, and each prepares the conditions for a larger work for those who follow. It is said that the word "mankind" never passed the lips of Plato or Aristotle; and yet nothing is more certain than that these great souls contributed a vast impulse toward that noble word. They helped to fashion the lips of the world for its mighty utterance.

A most valiant and rugged apostleship of this gospel of prophetic industry has been slowly gathering out of the centuries toward its sacred standard. Its disciples have come from all fields. They have risen from their successful toil in the joy of possessing a new-found truth, and they have run to and fro seeking recognition for it, sometimes to be rewarded and again to be defeated. Quite as often as otherwise in the aggregate history they have been fated to go to their graves unacknowledged, and passing many a sorrow and indignity along their darkening way. But through all this experience the truth has steadily progressed. Over every scene of darkness its light has constantly dawned; and the people are realizing in

this generation as they have never realized before that all truth is kindred whether it be found in one department of investigation or another. There is no alien truth, from the dust beneath our feet to the highest law of the eternal Spirit. One mind is evidenced in all things ; and *unity*, therefore, is the key to every legitimate interpretation of whatever is. Co-operation and brotherhood are the words of growing power, spoken from rank to rank amidst the intelligent workers of our times, while it is only a Sanballatan ignorance that stands aloof and scoffs at the industry that would build and is building the greater city of God. These toilers are all helping each other. The astronomers have helped the real interpreters of religion by disclosing a larger field for the display of the Divine Power ; the geologists have aided them by disclosing a far longer period ; while the inventors and discoverers in other fields have aided the religionists by multiplying the facilities of exchange between the various classes of mankind. Watt and Fulton and Stephenson converted steam into a vast commercial and industrial agent, but humanity has investments in it far more valuable than the markets of New York and London ever recognize. No man can find a truth of God even in the most obscure and lowermost reach of matter but he may speed with it to the highest heavens at once if he do but know the way.

These men who have toiled somewhat removed from the heart of things have prepared nevertheless a most admirable setting for the jewels of the mind and spirit, or, in other words, for the philosophy and religion of the race. This rough labor has been in-

dispensable to the final result of spiritual consciousness, as the foundation walls of the temple have been essential to the most fascinating art of an Angelo or a Raphael. They have all toiled toward the central and highest divinity, and they all hold honorable rank in the groups of divine workmen.

Within these exterior circles of physical environment, and yet not touching, though it sustains the glowing spirit and meaning of religion, another circle is drawn which partakes more of the sensitiveness and life of the soul. Another class of men are found in this interior region of the great world's life, whose work closely borders on that of the distinctively religious class. I refer to the labor of those men who are disclosing the unity of the race, along the lines of human speech. The students of language have discovered that it is one and not many. It seems an incredible statement, but the plodding students have verified it. The proposition was received at first with a vast ridicule, and sneers without number. There was much disgust and not a little anger. But the patient facts have waited their time; till now the measure of incredulity is the measure of ignorance. There are many languages, but there is only one language. All the unnumbered varieties of human speech have sprung from one source; and thus we find the law of unity declared by the workmen toiling on the outermost edge of things, reaffirmed by those in the inner courts who stand very near the sacredest altar. From afar off, and from all directions, the patient students and interpreters gather, and the exultant words on the lips of all are: "The Universe is One;" "Law is One;" "Force is One;" "Language

is One." And all these concentric circles from the extremest verge of the fields of dust lend their gathering strength of assured truth to sustain the still greater word that *Religion is One*. This is the central and highest affirmation of unity, and explains and justifies all the lesser unities of the world; whereas if we deny that religion is one, we part company with the combined forces of the best intelligence of our times, and we retreat along those very avenues where the unbroken ranks of that same intelligence are marching to splendid victory.

From such considerations as these it will be seen and admitted, I think, that our growing company of the more generous interpreters of religion have chosen their seat, not only wisely and reverently, but also in perfect accord with the highest and best intellectual temper, with the most enlightened tendencies and judgments regarding other and yet analogous problems of the world in which we live. After all the other enlightened verdicts concerning law and force and language—the universe indeed—have been rendered, all confirming the great fact of unity, it would seem incredible that any intelligent person should be found who would claim religion to be a special and detached interest, an artificial creation specially and supernaturally ordained—and even this at a comparatively late date—and committed by arbitrary methods to a special and separate class of mankind.

All this is strangely out of sympathy with the intellectual habit and the entire gravitation of our clearest intelligence. The position cannot be maintained unless all the other movements and tenden-

cies of our modern thinking shall be reversed, — a result which the most ardent devotee of the older thought will hardly anticipate. It is the judgment from a corner, be it uttered by whomsoever. It takes religion from its great and wide fellowships, severs it from the universal “vine” and leaves it to wither on every field of modern enlightenment, despite the frantic efforts of the mere provincialists to water and nourish it into life. Not so are the fortunes of the great and representative forms of thought in other departments. Abiding in their large and growing unities with the organic laws of Providence they increase in strength, and take their well-assured place in the genial companionships of a growing intellectual vigor and a deepening and inspiring faith.

In no department of modern investigation is the superficial habit of thinking indulged to so great an extent — and accorded withal so much respect — as in the religious department. If a man were to approach any company of intelligent people in this day, and should plead before them in behalf of American or European gravitation as separate and distinct, he would at once be suspected as having lost his wits; if he should come before a college of the best linguists pleading the merits of the Greek or Latin or French, Spanish, Italian, or any other language, as separate and distinct from all others, he would not be listened to with patience, or with respect for his intelligence. His auditors would say to him: “Your plea might have been accepted in the seventeenth century, but it is not valid in the nineteenth.” Rejected by these associations, he would fare no better if he were to invade the council chambers of men who

have been studying the correlation and conservation of energy, and should there advocate the claims of absolutely distinct forces. They would say to him: "You have come too late." In the various assemblages of religionists he would have a more patient and approving audience, as he should advocate some isolated religion; but it requires no extraordinary vision to discover a growing impatience even there, before these pleaders for the detached and consequently withering branches. That impatience is invading the average ranks of religious students more and more, while our greater seers have already rejected entirely the plea that any one religion has come supernaturally from God and thus enjoys the sole favor and protection of Heaven. Not exclusion but inclusion; not many but one,—these are the imperial words.

To reach the results of unity already attained in the public mind has cost many a conflict, many a sorrow, even many a death. If we listen at the closed door of the temple of History we shall hear the exultant voices of men delighted with their discoveries of larger truth, and the accusing voices of the devotees of the old and established orders. There is clashing and discord, with much of bitterness and many a prophecy of disaster. A vanquished advocate generally assumes the character of a prophet of evil. There was no end of the calamities which the great Church of Rome declared would follow the acceptance of Galileo's opinions. They were sacrilegious and an affront in the sight of Heaven. Professor Hutton, of Edinburgh, shocked the religious sense of Scotland and all Europe, when

he declared that as a result of his studies in geology he could find no traces of a beginning of things, and no prospect of an end. And Sir Charles Lyell and his associates incurred the charge of irreligion when they urged that the human race had occupied this earth for a far longer period than that accorded by the old readings of Genesis. Less than a century ago the professors of the elegant Greek and Latin languages in the universities of Europe and Great Britain would not believe that their beloved and classic tongues had any kinship with the "jargon of savages." The original introduction of the Sanskrit language to European scholars was attended with grave doubts and some misgiving. The first claims in behalf of that language could obtain a hearing only with difficulty; and even so shrewd a scholar as Dugald Stewart, only sixty years now in his grave, said that there was no such language as Sanskrit, at all, and he wrote his now incredible essay to show how "those arch-forgers and liars—the Brahmins"—had tried to patch together a vast imposition of language, after the style of the Greek and Latin, wherewith to deceive credulous people.

On the other hand, Frederick Schlegel had the courage to believe in the Sanskrit language and literature, and so believing he investigated, and in 1808 published his work "On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians," and so sent forth a book which became the basis of the science of language,—a science which few are now so ignorant as to call in question.

Dugald Stewart's position seems to-day incredible, and would be amusing did it not show into what lam-

entable errors even intelligent men may sometimes fall, through the blind leadership of prejudice and a too absolute devotion to old customs. We dismiss his folly while wondering at the resources of that ancient literature which was rich in its treasures even in the days of Socrates and Plato,—a literature in the disclosure of whose wealth our greatest scholars are laboriously engaged and in the wisdom of which they find ample compensation. The Orient had lived and thought in the ancient days, and its people had built up their thought in a language whose elements are common in the tongues of India, Persia, Greece, Italy, and Germany. It is a marvellous discovery not only in language, but in thought, and in religious thought as well, and it only hastens forward that inevitable tendency whose goal is the absolute unity of all human interests under one all-inclusive and all-organizing mind.

Men, I know, will deny this; and multitudes will say, "Language may be one, law may be one, force may be one; but one religion is something far different; religion came from God; it is a special revelation, and therefore can never be brought under any law of common association." So said many men of these other claims virtually at one time in their history, but they have all yielded to the inevitable, and the old special plea is abandoned. Few men could be more bitter in their denunciation of the unity of religion than Stewart was in his denunciation of the unity of language; but no one is so abject in his poverty of understanding to-day as to take up his plea or repeat his violent accusations.

This doctrine of the unity of human speech has

gained a recognized seat at "the Round Table of the intellectual chivalry of the world," and the doctrine of the unity of religion is destined to similar honors and recognitions among the students of comparative theology.

There were as many evidences of an absolute separation between various classes of language a century ago as there are of a like separation between different religions now. To the unenlightened mind those linguistic differences were radical and complete, but intelligence has bridged all those chasms. Men who cherished a pride in the great classic languages made immortal by the eloquence of Demosthenes and Cicero might rebel at the thought of inferior associations and linguistic affinities; but all in vain. The haughty Cæsar, who could doubtless use his classic Latin with ample facility, might boast a vast superiority over, and an absolute severance from, the barbarians whom he fought in Gaul and Germany. But however great the severance in some fortunes, there was one great bond of unity. It was the bond of speech.

"I have,"	in Latin is	<i>habeo</i> ,	in Gothic,	<i>haba</i> .
"Thou hast,"	"	<i>habes</i> ,	"	<i>habais</i> .
"He has,"	"	<i>habet</i> ,	"	<i>habaip</i> .
"We have,"	"	<i>habemus</i> ,	"	<i>habam</i> .
"You have,"	"	<i>habetis</i> ,	"	<i>habaip</i> .
"They have,"	"	<i>habent</i> ,	"	<i>habant</i> .

Far back in the centuries is thus seen a common basis, which even a Roman emperor could not repudiate.

Max Müller takes the single elements "ar," "spac," and "mar," and many others, and he devotes page after page to their ramifications in various

languages, always bearing the same primary significance, and always essential to the exchange of thought between man and man. And who can doubt that a law analogous to this pervades and governs the religious destinies of mankind? The idea of God is in all religions; the idea of man's relation to God is in all religions; the conception that human life lived in obedience to the will of God will be a more prosperous life, is in all; a belief in an existence beyond the present is common to all; and the conviction that man owes certain duties to his fellows pervades every religious system known to the annals of mankind. These conceptions will be modified in form as human beings reach from their primary acknowledgment, to give them expression and embodiment; but elementally they are the same. They cannot be radically changed any more successfully than the elements of language can be changed. It is told of the Emperor Tiberius that when he had made a mistake in the use of a word, he was reproved by the grammarian Marcellus; whereupon the grammarian Capito, who would flatter the Emperor sooner than tell the truth, said that the Latin he had used was good Latin, or if not, it soon would be. Marcellus, indignant at the affront thus imposed upon his favorite study, replied, "Capito is a liar! for, Cæsar, thou canst give the Roman citizenship to men, but not to words." We may not be as emphatic as Marcellus was, in characterizing those who would pervert the elements of religion, but the attempt to release them from the law of their primary control will be equally fruitless.

There are innumerable forms of religious life in the

world ; but these, instead of being developed from as many different elements, are the infinitely varied developments of the same original instinct. And it does not seem to me an impossible or even a difficult task, for any sympathetic or appreciative person to trace the growth of this religious germ in mankind from the lowest and sometimes very shocking embodiments of it in the superstitions of the ignorant, up to the fairest forms of grace among the most enlightened classes of men.

It is certain that religion is an ancient fact in the history of the race. It is one of the oldest facts of history. It began when human life began ; and the history of any class, tribe, or people that should omit the religious chapters would be incomplete. And besides this, if we should recede beyond the borders of authentic history to the vague and shadowy regions of myth, and the very phantom realms of legend and vagrant tradition, we should find religion among the most constant facts in a realm where everything seems undefined.

The religious procession, formed for the purpose of finding God and the highest good of which the world has dreamed, is a long procession, and it has been recruited from every land in every generation. From all cities and hamlets, from forest solitudes and the desolation of desert sands, from the islands of the sea and from mountain retreats, the pilgrims have come, eager to go in quest of this great fortune. The impelling cause has been in the heart of man, and the alluring charm has been in the prophecies of the world without and the world within. These seekers have paused here and there along this ancient way to erect their

shrines and temples, and to pay their vows and offer devotions to this form of deity or that form ; but always with the faith that each service would result in some added blessing. Some good has been found in every form. It is a claim which, perhaps, not every Christian will be willing to concede, but the broad-minded interpreters of religion and man will not withhold the acknowledgment.

There is a noble passage in the *Bhagavadgita* — a part of the Bible of India — which indicates a wonderful appreciation of the manifold gifts of Deity, — an appreciation which might not injure the average Christian, could he but share it generously. Concerning the worship of different gods, the great Deity said, “ Whichever form of deity any worshipper wishes to worship with faith, to that form I render his faith steady. Possessed of that faith he seeks to propitiate the Deity in that form, and he obtains from it those beneficial things which he desires, *though they are really given by me* ” (Bhag., p. 76). Here is a generosity on the part of the God of India which is not quenched or turned aside by the spectacle of a man worshipping at a lesser shrine. The great God makes the lesser god an instrument for the confirming of good.

I remember, in my boyhood, studying my geography in Morse’s Atlas, which combined textual description and maps in one volume. It was a volume of illustrated history as well. Among the pictures which shocked my boy mind was that of a Hindu prostrating himself before the image of a serpent. I recall the feeling of aversion and of half-unconscious blame with which I looked upon such “ worship.” I did not

then even so much as imagine that unfortunate man to be among the possibly true worshippers of the world. I held him aloof as in a certain vague limbo of condemnation. I have learned to think differently of the picture now; and instead of seeing the man as separate from the true worshippers, I can readily establish a sympathetic bond between him and every form of the most comely and enlightened worship of Europe or America to-day in the most thoroughly equipped churches. We shall not be aided in this humane task, however, if we attempt to judge of that serpent-worship from the vantage-ground of our modern intelligence. The scene must be judged from the circumstances which created it, and possessing the key thus furnished, its mystery can be solved at once. It will help our sympathies, too, to recall that had we been born in India, and been reared in the same degree of enlightenment, we should have done precisely as this prostrate man did. Have we any assurance to the contrary? And is our favor with our "Heavenly Father" determined by a geographical or time question? This man had inherited from time immemorial a belief in the transmigration of the soul,—a belief that has had a long-continued sway in India, Egypt, and Greece. This doctrine led people to think that good and evil spirits gained possession of human bodies and the bodies of animals of all kinds. Certain spirits were allied with the orders of the gods, a multitude of which were worshipped in India.

The people realized with sorrow enough that the cobra, or hooded serpent, whose image was in the picture, had the power of immediate and excruciating death. They imagined that a malignant spirit pos-

sessed the serpent's body,—a spirit whose good-will might be secured by gifts and sacrifices. They sought accordingly to win the good-will of this spirit. Their offerings thus become intelligible. And in this sacrifice they were one with humanity everywhere; for has it not been the aim of the worshippers in all lands and ages to secure the favorable mood of the gods toward them all? In the individualized customs of the people we realize the shocking barbarities more than in the instances of great peoples adopting a doctrine of sacrifice; but the principle is the same.

On the island of Borneo has lived a tribe of people who accounted for a failure of their crops by supposing that the earth-god was angry. Whereupon they slaughtered a human victim by the hands of the priest, and cutting his flesh into shreds, the farmers procured each a fragment, and thrusting a branch or stake into the ground and placing the flesh on the other end, so made a sacrifice to the earth-god, and secured thereby the promise of a better harvest. We should have done the same as they had we been reared as they. We are the creatures of circumstance very largely, and the process of emancipation from old thraldoms is very slow. We must not take the standard of our modern intelligence and judge other people by it,—people of the dark days. We shall never do them justice in this way. We may pass by the religious altars of the world and be shocked by the sacrifices of human beings that have been offered upon them, and still will the true interpreter of religion find in every spectacle of blood something to venerate. That "pagan" worship shall take its rightful place in the world-wide worship of the God of the whole

earth. The pyramid of a hundred and forty thousand skulls of human beings found by Cortez in his conquest of Mexico — beings offered on the altar of the Aztec war god — was a fearful, and yet in a certain divine sense a sacred, monument to the religious element in man. It was a testimony to their faith in the strengthening and helping spirit of Deity, — if only that spirit could be won by offerings dear to the devotees. It was a tremendous evidence of the omnipotence of the religious instinct in mankind. All this far-reaching sacrifice is an unequivocal testimony to the overwhelming force of that element. Who but a Being of omnipotence Himself could have created an element in man that would bear up under these tragic gifts? The sacrifices of human beings on the altars of religion, judged as an evidence of the commanding power of the religious passion in mankind, instead of driving us away in horror, should challenge our reverence and create anew our faith in the perpetuity of an interest which has such a basis for its support. It is an incalculable force, waiting only a wiser direction. It is a giant often begetting death, but it is the gigantic strength we need to study rather than the havoc it begets. It was the havoc which created the redemption fact, in the judgment of those who offered the sacrifices. And in this respect it may not be amiss to remind one and all that the Aztecs — the sacrificers, indeed, in all lands — have not been very far removed from the great organizing and directing genius of Christian thought touching the same momentous question. Was not God displeased, according to the historic and dominant thought of the Church? Did not His justice need placating, that man might

be saved an impending doom? Assuredly this has been the prevailing type of Christian thinking. And Jesus of Nazareth, gathering up in himself the august and tremendous meaning of all antecedent sacrifices, goes to the crowning altar of the world, and dies to win the favor of the Almighty! And does it overtax the imagination of the traditional worshipper, therefore, to draw a parallel between the ancient worship and the prevailing Christian type? The truth is, we are all the lineal descendants of that early ancestry in religion, and the traces of our sire we still bear. This history began with the thought that the Deity could be made more favorable to us by gifts; and it has continued in an unbroken line to our day. We do not now offer the sacrifices of blood, but instead the sacrifices of kindly and helpful deeds, so realizing, at last, through all the powers of evolution that the best gift we can make on the altar of religion is ourselves, our service on behalf of others.

But it should be remembered that our present more enlightened thought of man's relation to the Deity could not have been had not this educational process from the lower toward the higher been true of human history. Man does not spring at once from ignorance to enlightenment. It is by growth that we arrive at the better fortunes.

" We have not wings, — we cannot soar;
But we have feet to scale and climb,
By slow degrees, by more and more,
The cloudy summits of our time."

The world has always been engaged in effecting this divine ascent, and the labor of one generation has

been the level from which the next has commenced its task.

The Hindu who prostrated himself before the image of a serpent did it, not for himself alone, but for all mankind. The savages of Borneo did not offer their kindred for themselves only ; it was a world-offering. The shedding of human blood in any generation, in the name of religion, was an offering on the latest altar erected in the purest adoration of the All-Father. All this shocking history was enacted in our behalf ; it was written for our instruction. These sacrifices of human beings — all sacrifices of blood — are so many educational facts coming in between our modern enlightenment and the ancient, barren and wounding crags of ignorance. These tragedies of religion have thrust us farther and farther away from the darkness out into the brightening day. They were victims for our sakes ; and if they had not suffered for us, groped their darkened way for us, we should be obliged to take our places in those dark paths. They were barbarians for us ; they were savage and brutal for us ; they lived, worshipped darkly, and died for us, whereof we have abundant proof that had we been born and reared as they, instructed as they, we had lived as they. Moses was a school-master leading to Christ ; but he had his schoolmasters, and they theirs, and thus backward generation after generation each and all taking their great educational place, and working out the eternal thought and purpose of God.

“ The soul of man is widening toward the past ;
He spells the record of his long descent,
More largely conscious of the life that was.”

The history has its sorry chapters, but they must not be read as so many isolated chapters. The record is one great history, with a chapter ever preceding and a chapter ever following. This historical sequence must not be broken if religion, as a world-problem, will be understood.

The evolution of physical life upon the earth has chronicled a history analogous to that of religious life. There have been numberless forms of life in the ages past that would affright us now were they to walk abroad upon the earth, or disport themselves in the slimy ooze as in other times. These monstrous forms have ceased, but the life has hastened forward to more comely fashion.

If the theory of evolution be true, all these later forms of life rest on the ancient and forbidding types, and are possible now only because the others have been. All our refinements are the products of ancient savagery. We have been instructed unto grace by the prophetic savagery of the ancient days. Every tragedy, every horror indeed, has brought us forward along our eternal way. We can omit no chapter, however revolting. Omit it, and history is shortened, and its lesson forgotten, which must be relearned, and perhaps not now as safely as before. It is related of an officer in the battle of the Nile, that he was injured by some missile when in the act of issuing an order. The missile broke the skull, and arrested consciousness. He remained in that unconscious state till the surgeons lifted the fragment of bone that was pressing the brain, when consciousness returned, and he completed the order he was pronouncing when the injury befell. The instructive history

of days was stricken out of the man's life, and the continuity of his intelligence was resumed at the point where it was broken off.

If we could grant to a human being a continuous life, and yet make him unconscious for a thousand years, while yet the world should go forward in its arts and sciences, and its thronging life altogether, and then could we restore this man to consciousness, he would resume the progress of his rational life at the point where it was arrested. And so would he continue, a thousand years behind the intelligence of the world, until he could incorporate in his life the forms of consciousness borne by his fellows. Such a man would realize that others do not live for themselves alone, but for all men. And those who should witness his fortunes might realize that men live and think and work and make mistakes, not for themselves alone, but for the benefit of all.

In this fact is the key which unlocks the closed doors of the mighty past, and reveals to us the infinite benevolence of God. Its great word is that humanity is one, that history is one, that religion is one. It is not a conclusion reached by texts quoted from special books. It is the supreme verdict of every fact, every triumph, every tragedy, and sin even, of the world.

Men sometimes are found indulging the fancy that they hold no common bond with humanity at large. In religious thinking they are often found saying: "We have nothing common in our religion with the vulgar world. Our religion came from heaven: we have had a revelation; our prophets were inspired." But such a plea only convicts the pleaders of a con-

ceit which would provoke laughter throughout the world, did it not appear so pitiful. The transient verdict of ignorance may bear this superficial guise, but the judgments of intelligence will reject it at once.

In the presence of these vast unities of Providence, compelled by the resistless gravitations of the great world, such pleas are as the prattlings of childhood still toying with forces it cannot comprehend. It would seem sometimes that here and there are groups of men calling themselves theologians in our day, and assuming to interpret religion, whose intellectual consciousness was arrested a thousand years ago, and having partially regained the use of their faculties, are now engaged — with infinite embarrassment — in re-establishing the continuity of their relations with the world. The old land-marks are gone, methods have changed, new territories have been reached, and they find any amount of trouble in adjusting themselves to the new orders. Some destructive missile was hurled at them in some old battle of theological warfare, — in the form of a majority vote, perhaps, — and slumbering since, they are poorly prepared to join the living forces that are easily fashioning the intelligent world of to-day to higher forms. Their wild and frantic, and not infrequently ill-tempered, pleadings about “special and authoritative revelations,” is the voice from the religious toy-shops of the times, and has no part in the august councils where the eternal truth of things is growing to large recognition and a corresponding dignity and power.

Men accustomed to the lesser estimates of religion will feel a certain sense of loneliness in a field so large; but their sense of companionship must be re-

moved, not by limiting the field, but by enlarging their minds to suit the enlarging horizon. Frederick Robertson, whose spirit has charmed so many, and whose incisive intelligence has instructed so many persons in this generation, confesses to this feeling of solitude at one time in his life, but happily his narration does not terminate with that chapter. He says :

“It seems to me that this feeling of vagueness is inevitable when we dare to launch out upon the sea of truth. I remember that half-painful, half-sublime sensation in the first voyage I took out of sight of land when I was a boy, when old land-marks and horizon were gone, and I felt as if I had no home. It was a pain to find the world so large. By degrees, however, the mind became familiarized to that feeling, and a joyful sense of freedom came. So I think it is with *spiritual* truth. It is a strangely desolate feeling to perceive that the ‘truth’ and the ‘Gospel’ that we have known were but a small home-farm in the great universe ; but at last I think we begin to see sun, moon, and stars as before, and to discover that we are not lost, but free, with a latitude and longitude as certain, and far grander than before.”

We can readily imagine the solitude that would be anticipated by those who have organized their religious life into the special “plan of salvation” which embraces a small number of superficial particulars, — their solitude in forecasting the days when they should be invited to merge their “plan” in the universal order of the great expanding life of the world. A person passing out from a brilliantly lighted room at night cannot immediately see the stars. The eye needs a few moments for adjustment to the different degree of light ; but one after another the stars come

forth, and soon the vast dome is illuminated with splendors surpassing all the brilliancy of earthly scenes combined.

I have read the story of a Bostonian lost on a Western prairie. Night came on leaving him without a hint or sign of guidance, till at last he saw a light in the distance, and going to it he found a most meagre cottage, wherein the housewife had prepared the evening meal, and was waiting the return of husband and son from their daily toil. He learned of her the direction he should take, and then followed a conversation about the loneliness of living in a country so little populated, he contrasting the prairie home with populous Boston. He described the city as a Bostonian would. She listened for a time, and finally said:—

“Boston must be an interesting place, but I should think you would feel dreadful lonesome there.”

“Lonesome! But why should one feel lonesome there?”

“It is so far off!” was her reply.

It was far off from her. She had gathered all her earthly fortunes and ambitions into the little economies and activities of the prairie home, and any place far away from her would be lonesome. The many-mansioned world-house of the Father would be altogether too large for her. The limited place on the prairie better suited the measure of her estimates and plans of life.

Precisely this is the fortune of many people religiously. They have their “books,” their “denomination,” their “doctrines.” They are filled with the “chosen people” idea. God is “their God.” He has “separated” them from the common mass of man-

kind,—concerning whom they have no intelligent comprehension,—and has signalized His choice of them by giving them “a supernatural revelation,” an “infallible Bible.” It is “inspired;” it is “authoritative.” And thus the party claims are urged, to the practical exclusion of the great world-problem of religion and man. People who live without their Church, their Bible, their “plan,” must be very lonesome and much imperilled, because they are “so far off.”

And what an array of pleaders do we find for these small issues! Theological schools are organized, and money is begged, and books are published, and editors write leading articles, and preachers declaim, and churches are built,—all to deepen the impression and spread the gospel of loneliness to all who are “so far off!” But far off from whom? would be a pertinent question. The answer generally would be, “From us.” But is that final? Far off from God, would be a more critical and a more practical reply. That answer would turn the mind in a wholesome direction. Who is far off from God? And what is the evidence of remoteness? Is the fact that other people have not our “Bibles,” our “denominations,” our “inspirations,” our “plans of salvation,” an absolute proof that they are far off from God? They have their “books,” their “sects,” their “plans,” and they have access to the great God, even through their little gods. No one party can successfully claim an exclusive monopoly of the Divine attention. The plea may be made, but the substantiating of it is the laborious task.

The process of civilization has been the process of

eliminating the element of caprice from man's estimate of God and man, and the establishing of human judgment on the basis of rationality. This process must go forward even in the face of multitudes who yet plead their special and separate plans and books and inspirations and revelations, till the sense and meaning, God as one, humanity as one, religion as one, truth as one, shall pervade the small minds and convert them to a more generous mood. The flying fish must dip his wings in water at every ten yards' distance if he will sustain himself in the air; but the eagle takes his long flight, which would seem lonely to the creature of the brief spaces, and he makes great mountains his companions, and is at home in the unlimited heavens. He breaks his solitudes with his august friends. So ought the religionist to do. The spirit of the universal should be the great word on the lips and in the heart of those who would understand religion in the Providence of the Infinite Father.

I do not mean, when I speak of all people having their sacred "books" and "inspirations" and "revelations," that all are alike valuable in the abstract. In the processes of evolution the human being is the highest embodiment of life undoubtedly. But it will be well for us to remember that the value of life is in its adjustment to its sphere. A bird is more successful in navigating the air than a human being could be; the fish is a master in the water, when a human being would be helpless. That little family on the Illinois prairie were happier there with their simple habits and inhaling the pure air laden with the fragrance of the wild-flowers and the newly turned

sod than they could have been in the splendors of an Inauguration Ball, where wealth glowed in diamonds and the air was heavy with the richest perfumes of Paris or the Orient. Adaptation is one of the conditions of value. The Catholic and the Episcopalian want a spectacular religious method; the Quaker wants a subjective and meditative one. But the law of variation does not terminate with these types. The people of different grades require different ministries for their progress. India will develop one type, while Greece will develop another. Nature in India is drawn upon a scale so immense, and is so violent there, that man has little or no companionship with her. She admits him to none of her councils; and as a consequence, man in India is imaginative, and has developed an imaginative literature. The reasoning faculties are overwhelmed by the vastness and violence of Nature there. In Greece Nature is more approachable, more amiable, more companionable. She seems to have taken man into fellowship with her, and as a result the Greeks have always been rationalists. The reasoning faculties were respected. Intellectual problems resting in the domain of reason were more readily solved. We are all rationalists in daylight, because we see the relation of things. We are superstitious and imaginative in the dark, for the reason that we are conscious of certain effects; but the cause we do not know. Intelligence is light; ignorance is darkness. We are not to forget that Greece has been imaginative, but Greek imagination has been associated with reason to a far greater extent than in India. The Greek gods were human, and never approached the type of

Indian deities, so often found to be the monstrous creations of the untutored imagination. Religion has followed these laws ; and while before a uniform standard of judgment there may appear a great diversity of moral excellence in different religious systems, we must remember that the law of adaptation determines the relative value of things.

Christianity, judged by an ideal standard, is the supreme form of religious development, but as related to certain types of life, its value might be less than some other forms. It is the concurrent circumstance which gives value to any and all forces. The Koran may be better fitted to the mass of its devotees than the New Testament would be. The Old Testament could not exchange dates with the New without injuring the fortunes of the people, any more than the carboniferous era in geologic history could exchange dates with the glacial period. The Vedic hymns of India have had their place in the history of God's purposes ; the Avesta has served God's purpose in Persia, no doubt. So men have served. Buddha in India first, and then in China, Zoroaster in his country, Mohammed in his, Moses in his,—all have served, and God is over all. The Prophet of Nazareth gathers all their virtues, and thus becomes more representative.

And so the religious element which God gave to His children in the beginning has been growing through the ages, and is destined yet to grow to a more imperial and commanding power.

Whatever our specialties of book or sect, or claim of any kind may be, they must be made to harmonize with this universal sway of the Divine mind. No

voice issuing from a mere sectarian or class corner can interpret the Greater Voice that has been speaking through all lands and to all generations.

Copernicus, in dedicating his work to Pope Paul III., wrote that he was brought to the discovery of the sun's central position and the diurnal motion of the earth, not by observation or analysis, but by the feeling of a want of symmetry in the Ptolemaic system. The same feeling must be experienced, I think, by any and all impartial students when they undertake to investigate the subject of religion from these partial data furnished by the special and exclusive systems of religious thought. Westminster Abbey cannot be seen in all the magnificence of its complete design from any of its side chapels. The dome of the Capitol cannot be illuminated by a light in a retired nook of the great structure. The heavens were not symmetrical to the understandings of men so long as they said the earth was the great central and governing body. The earth is not large enough on which to erect the instruments that shall command the movements of all the spheres. The results of an experiment so inadequate will always be wanting in symmetry. But with how much greater emphasis may we urge that no one sect or party in the great system of religion is large enough to explain the universe of religion! Every party comes pleading the story of a special book or creed; and whatever may be said of the generosity of the book or the creed so far as its own essential meaning is concerned, yet in the lips of its devotees, no book or creed has yet been generous enough to do justice to all the worshippers. The Universalist Church of America has chosen a

most noble name ; and from its implied inclusiveness, we might expect to see its great interpretive instruments sweeping the entire circle of God and man in faithful obedience to the genius of the Universal ; but the ancient restrictions of partialism seem to balk the natural action of the thought, in many quarters, and the instrument commands only a small arc of the generously proclaimed circle. The ancient rust is in the mechanism, and a considerable number yet bearing the large name plead the "special revelations" and special "supernaturalisms" so clinging to the essential partialisms and appearing less consistent with the large title. A rapidly growing number in that church, however, are moving for a type of interpretation which shall make the thought agree with the title of the church.

This spectacle of an endless succession of special pleaders, all with the "Book" in hand, amply justifies the word of Professor Max Müller in one of his recent Glasgow lectures, "that one of the greatest needs of the world to-day is a bookless religion." If these special attorneys for a special cause could but lay aside for the moment the Book, and turn to the great religious soul of humanity, I doubt not a nobler impulse would be felt ; and the heart of humanity throbbing into the souls of all these specialists, a new eloquence would be heard pleading the religion, not of a party but of the great brotherhood, — not of the letter but of the spirit. Let us once choose the Theocentric position, — let God be the organic centre of our whole thought of religion, — and then the worshipping world becomes intelligible. The centuries bring their augmenting revelations, and hu-

manity is seen through all the ages as rising to a diviner life.

With this position assumed, our faith in God and religion is vastly strengthened. It is incredible that any man should feel his faith in God diminished by discovering that man always and everywhere has believed in God; that he should abandon his faith in immortality on discovering that everybody else has believed it. These discoveries must persuade him that for some very conclusive reason, these great convictions fit the structure, the entire nature of the human being. From the long pilgrimage through every land and every century a man must return to feel that this common faith of mankind rises to the absolutism of a demonstration of the truth concerning these supreme affirmations, — an absolutism before which scepticism is subdued into silence, only to break forth again as a recreated spirit of faith and reverence and love.

The man or the church declaring that religion is one in its essential meaning, stands to-day encircled by the mightiest defences. Every intrenchment of modern thought defends that position, and a man so thinking and believing, and loving his thinking and his believing, has every inspiration for his toil, the light of every hope for his encouragement, and the living presence of the Mighty God for his everlasting strength.

V.

CHRISTIANITY AND SECULARISM.

BY REV. ALEXANDER KENT.

I. CHRISTIANITY.

THE final test of Christianity must be found in its relation to life; for life in its largest sense is the end for which all else exists. It is the flowering of the material universe; that in which the universe has its only possible explanation. If we strive to imagine for a moment the utter absence of life, in all its sentient and conscious forms, we shall find it impossible to conceive of any end which this infinite system or any part of it could serve. We cannot think of an end or use except as related to conscious being. There must be faculties of perception and sensation to which things visible address themselves, or these can have no possible meaning.

If it be said that God made the world for His own glory and pleasure, we are thinking of Him as a conscious being, to whose faculties the universe addresses itself, to whose enjoyment and satisfaction it ministers, and in whose satisfaction and enjoyment it finds its reason for being. There is no possible escape from the conclusion that life is the end which the whole machinery of this visible universe is serving, and that its highest end is to be found in the highest form of life which the latter is capable of

producing, or to which it ministers. It is not meant, of course, that the visible alone is capable of producing any form of life. The visible does not exist alone. It cannot exist alone, any more than our mortal bodies can exist without the animating spirit, the invisible, vitalizing power. The infinite invisible is that in which the visible has its being, and by which all its phenomena are determined. But all that is phenomenal has its only explanation in those forms of life to which it ministers, and in those conscious experiences by which living beings come into vital sympathy and fellowship with the invisible life-giving power. Therefore I say that the final test of Christianity must be found in its relation to that life which puts man at one with himself, brings him into harmony with those laws that condition his being, and gives him a sense of communion and fellowship with the Life of the universe. That the Founder of Christianity claimed this for it, no one will question. Not only is the claim set forth specifically, as when Jesus says, "I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly," but it is the warp of the whole web of Christian teaching,—that which holds the woof, or filling of it, together. That the end is a worthy one—nay, the very highest and worthiest that any religion or science or philosophy can propose—is, I think, beyond dispute. For life in this large sense is the fruition of being. It is at once the blessedness of joyous activity, delightful harmony, and restorative repose. The aim of Christianity then is life,—life in the individual, and life in society. It does not propose to content itself with saving men, it proposes to save mankind. It has a care not only

for the atoms, but for the mass. The band of individual disciples is to grow into the organized and universal kingdom of God. It aims at something more than the rescue of a chosen few from a social order left in sin, it aims at the reconstruction of the social organism. Its ultimate for this world, as elsewhere, is the reign of righteousness,—not the righteousness of the law merely, but the righteousness of love, the righteousness of God.

The life, therefore, at which Christianity aims is the life of the Highest. Its injunction to every human soul is, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” It tells us that the life of God, the life of the universe, is a continuous outflow of service and benefaction; that nothing which He has made is so small as to escape His providential care and purpose; that He is kind even to the unthankful and the evil; that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His notice; and that we are of more value in His sight than many sparrows. In the thought of Christianity, then, infinite power and infinite wisdom mean infinite love and infinite service,—infinite unselfishness. The life of the Highest is a life of devotion and service to the humblest. God rules this universe, not for what of praise and glory He can get out of it, but for what of Himself, His own righteousness, His own peace, His own joy, He can put into it. This is the Christian thought of the life of the Highest, and we are to be perfect “even as He is perfect.” Christianity, therefore, is first a *theory of life*. It proclaims the laws of life,—the conditions under which life may be realized. It presents these as having their root in

the infinite goodness, and standing in necessary and eternal relations to the welfare of those on whom they bear, and thus offers motives to the conduct and character it enjoins superior to those offered by any other system. Its thought of love as the root of law and the source of pain is the great reconciling power of religion. Its thought of life as the normal activity of the man in co-operation with God,—the glad experience of the child going about the business of its father,—is full of the highest encouragement and loftiest inspiration. So far as men come under the influence of this theory of life a spirit of sonship and brotherhood animates and controls them, and this spirit is the very soul of the truest human life.

But, in the second place, Christianity is more than a theory of life. Jesus not only preached, he practised; he embodied and illustrated the truths he taught. Life in its large sense was realized in him. He manifested in himself the highest form of it yet known to men. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

We may therefore define Christianity as *that theory and practice of right living set forth in the teaching and life of Jesus the Christ as recorded in the Gospels.*

Consider it first as a theory of life. A theory of life, to have any value, must have,—

I. A worthy end or ideal.

II. It must present adequate means for the attainment of this end or ideal.

I. A worthy ideal of life for man must embrace the whole man, and contemplate life in every part. Christianity assuredly does this. As taught and practised by its Founder, it is entirely free from any partial bias or ascetic taint. "The Son of man came

eliminating the element of caprice from man's estimate of God and man, and the establishing of human judgment on the basis of rationality. This process must go forward even in the face of multitudes who yet plead their special and separate plans and books and inspirations and revelations, till the sense and meaning, God as one, humanity as one, religion as one, truth as one, shall pervade the small minds and convert them to a more generous mood. The flying fish must dip his wings in water at every ten yards' distance if he will sustain himself in the air; but the eagle takes his long flight, which would seem lonely to the creature of the brief spaces, and he makes great mountains his companions, and is at home in the unlimited heavens. He breaks his solitudes with his august friends. So ought the religionist to do. The spirit of the universal should be the great word on the lips and in the heart of those who would understand religion in the Providence of the Infinite Father.

I do not mean, when I speak of all people having their sacred "books" and "inspirations" and "revelations," that all are alike valuable in the abstract. In the processes of evolution the human being is the highest embodiment of life undoubtedly. But it will be well for us to remember that the value of life is in its adjustment to its sphere. A bird is more successful in navigating the air than a human being could be; the fish is a master in the water, when a human being would be helpless. That little family on the Illinois prairie were happier there with their simple habits and inhaling the pure air laden with the fragrance of the wild-flowers and the newly turned

II. Does the Christ theory of life present adequate motives to the attainment of its ideal? It presents all the motives of which the nature of the case admits. It covers the whole field of legitimate motive.

(1) It presents life as a good in itself,—something to be desired for its own sake. Life is the pearl of great price which a man can well afford to buy at the cost of all else. It is a *present* good,—like water to the thirsty, food to the hungry, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, freedom to the captive, liberty to the enslaved. It is not something to be secured now, simply for the value it is sure to have by and by, but something that holds a present blessing,—that is, a blessing to him who finds it, and to all who come within the scope of its influence.

(2) In confirmation of this, the Christ-theory of life points man to his origin and nature. He is a child of God, and as such must find life where God finds His life. But God finds His life in the service of His creatures. His whole life is manifestly a life of ministry. If man, then, would truly live, he must come into union and fellowship with God in this service. The one purpose of divine government over man is to carry him toward this end.

(3) In this direction, therefore, lies his destiny. He can have no other. Soon or late he must learn this truth, and adjust himself to its requirements. The final outcome of all prodigality must be the sin-sick, weary, humble, penitent home-coming. There is no rest for the soul out of harmony with God. Toward harmony, therefore, all the forces of Divine government eternally impel.

(4) Divine government, then, is parental, not

despotic. God seeks the welfare of His children, not tribute from His subjects. In this thought we have morally the highest motive to genuine goodness that can possibly be offered. All that affirms the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the certain triumph of good over evil; all that affirms the blessedness of righteous being, of being at one with God in purpose and spirit,—belongs to the realm of Christian motive and to Christianity considered as a theory of life. But this exhausts the whole realm of legitimate motive; for these affirmations respecting the conditions or laws of life have their negative as well as positive aspect. If life, in the Christ-thought, is a good in itself, something to be desired for its own sake, then the opposite of this—namely, a state of moral death—is evil in itself, something to be shunned and put away from us on account of its inherent character, and not simply or chiefly on account of any dangers or consequences. Accordingly, in the Christ-theory of life, sin is the one thing from which man needs redemption. To break its power and dominion in the soul is to effect redemption. But while sin is recognized as the real evil, its perils and consequences are not by any means overlooked. These are pictured in most vivid colors. They are portrayed for purposes of restraint and warning, as they are used in the providence of God for correction and discipline. It is to serve the ends of parental government that “tribulation and anguish come upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” These are the tokens to the child that he is wandering from home and life. We may paint the picture of sin’s degrading and damning power as dark as we will; we

can never exceed the limit of truth so long as we keep in sight the fact that life is the end toward which all these consequences of evil are working.

But, as already observed, Christianity is more than a *theory* of life. It is the practice; it is theory in action. Jesus not only pointed out the way to the Father, he walked in it. He not only taught the truth, he lived it. He not only told men of the life of God, he embodied it before their eyes, so that it seemed no figure to say he was "the way, and the truth, and the life." He embodied in his life his conception of the Divine life; that is, of the life of moral being true to the law of its own nature. So loyal was he felt to be—not only in intent, but in fact—to the highest thought of goodness that the author of the letter to the Hebrews calls him "the brightness of his [Father's] glory, and the express image of his person;" and Paul does not hesitate to say that "in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Christianity, then, is essentially the Christ theory and practice of right living. Life here and now, always here and always now, wherever and whenever it comes to men, is the aim and end with and toward which it constantly works. And so it is first of all "the religion of the kingdom of God on earth." The realization of this kingdom is the business of Christians. The condition of having life in ourselves is the promotion of life in others, for this is the substance of all Divine activities; and we come into sympathy and fellowship with God only as we lovingly co-operate with Him. We must, indeed, get right ourselves before we can work effectively in behalf of others. But the first step toward getting ourselves right is a

realization of the duties which we owe to others. For the Christ-theory of life is that all true life is a service, or ministry. No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's, bound to that law of service which holds in its grasp all moral being. This law is not, as many seem to suppose, that every man shall devote some part of his life to this service, but that every man shall devote to it the whole of his life. We are to engage in no activities that do not constitute a service, and we are to conduct all activities in such a manner, with such a purpose, and in such a spirit as will make them of service. The activities of the kingdom of God, then, must include all activities in which the Christian is permitted to engage. It is through these — all of these, and not any part of them, to the exclusion of others — that the life of religion is to find expression in the world.

This is our thought of Christianity, its meaning and scope. We are now prepared to consider its relation to the secular spirit.

II. SECULARISM.

It is not the purpose of this paper to deal with secularism as an organized movement, openly and avowedly hostile to religion, and claiming for itself the whole field of human thought and endeavor. We have in mind a more widely prevalent and dangerously plausible theory than this, — a theory that pays all deference to religion in what is assumed to be its proper place or sphere, and is only disrespectful and antagonistic when religion essays to meddle with business or politics or such other matters as are generally

conceded to lie among the secularities of life. This sort of secularism, seemingly more modest than the other, proposes to divide the field of life with religion, taking to itself all that concerns man's interests in the world that is, and leaving to religion all that concerns his interests in the world to come. This is the recognized and respected secularism of Christendom, — the genuine dictionary article as defined by Webster. "Secular" he defines as "pertaining to this present world, or to things not spiritual or holy; relating to things not immediately or primarily respecting the soul, but the body; worldly." The reader is asked to observe at this point that the definition assumes that man has two interests in life, — one religious, the other secular; and that these may be properly and sharply distinguished from each other. The religious interest is that which concerns the soul's relation to God, to His revealed will, and to all those institutions which have for their object the promotion of the religious life. The secular interest is that which concerns man's relation to the world in which he finds himself, to the community and nation of which he is a member and citizen, and to that life of prosperity and comfort, desirable to him now as a physical, intellectual, and social being.

It is assumed, I say, in this definition, which sets forth the established popular usage, that these interests are not only separate and distinct in the minds of men, but are meant to be so in the economy of God; that the sphere of religion is entirely distinct from that of the secular life, and that of the secular life entirely separate from that of religion. Hence men are judged as religious or secular according as

the one or the other of these spheres commands their activities and energies.

If a man is conspicuous in the Church; if he scrupulously observes the Sabbath; if he is careful to preserve family devotion; if he is always ready to pray and exhort and bear testimony of a certain sort,— he is religious. If, on the other hand, he is indifferent toward or neglectful of these things; if his whole time and energy are engrossed with the conduct of business or the affairs of State, in the furtherance of science or the promotion of art,— he is secular, but not religious. But if he is active in both of these spheres; if he satisfies the demands of the Church while holding his place in the world of business and science, of art and politics,— then he is both secular and religious. He serves God with one part of his life, himself and others with the other part.

Now, it is freely granted that this conception is not sharply defined in the minds of men, nor consistently carried out. For, being a false conception, it is impossible that men who get even a glimpse of the true, should consistently adhere to it. Therefore it is quite common to find men ignoring this dual conception, and speaking of life as a whole, or unit. It is this true conception of life as *one* in the whole range of human activities, whether of work or of worship, that I wish to bring out in this paper.

And I observe, in the first place, that this unity of life is evidenced by the fact that no man can serve two such masters as Christianity and Secularism. They are so thoroughly hostile in purpose and spirit that to hold to the one is necessarily to despise the other. We cannot be loyal both to God and Mammon.

What is meant is this: a man cannot be dominated by the secular spirit in one half of his life, and by the Christian spirit in the other half. He cannot put a secular spirit into the conduct of business, and a Christian spirit into the activities of the Church. One spirit will inevitably dominate the whole life of the man. The good and the evil will not dwell in peace in the same soul. The struggle for the mastery will inevitably go on until one or the other is cast out. Either the Christian spirit will cast out the secular spirit and make the man devoutly and conscientiously religious through the whole range of his social and business activities, or the secular spirit will drive out the Christian spirit and make the man a self-seeker and self-server even in his acts of so-called worship. If Christianity be true, therefore, secularism is false, and has no right to be. It has no place whatever in a Christian life or in a Christian state. It does not belong to the kingdom of God.

“But,” it is said, “surely those things called secular are necessary to our existence. The activities of business alone make possible the institutions of religion. You would not, then, make man indifferent to these activities?” Most certainly not. On the contrary, we would quicken his interest in these things; but we would try to make him see that this very life of business, in which of necessity he must spend the greater part of his waking hours, is the most important part of the life of religion. We would make him feel that this life of business, when rightly apprehended and devoutly pursued, is the chief part of that service which, as a co-worker with God, he is permitted to render to his fellow-men. We would have

him know and realize that this service is not simply a means of building up religious institutions, but is itself, when directed and pervaded by the Christian spirit, the principal part of the religious life. In other words, we claim the whole life of man for God and religion; that is, for co-operation with God in the service of our brother.

Secularism, as activity devoid of this religious purpose and this religious spirit, has no place whatever in the kingdom of God as revealed in the Christ. All useful activity is Christian service, and if rendered in a Christian spirit and with a sense of divine fellowship, may carry with it all the elements of sacramental peace and sacramental power. This is the Christian conception of business and life. Religion, therefore, is in our thought the root of business, and business in its ideal form — the form of service — is the embodiment of religion. You will see at once how thoroughly this thought is at one with our definition of Christianity as “the Christ theory and practice of right living.” The very first element in right living is that industry by which we get an equitable right to that which supports life. Society is only possible through reciprocity of service. The measure of reciprocity is the measure of civilization. Whoever draws from society without giving in return something that is needed by others, is a parasite or a pauper. The justice, the honesty, the fairness, that call on us to give if we would take, are essentials in any worthy thought of religion. But Christianity goes farther than this. It would not only have us just and honorable, anxious to pay our way in the world, but it would have us full of a generous and

helpful spirit, eager to give to those who cannot earn, loving to help those unable to help themselves, overflowing with a spirit of usefulness and service that would pour itself out freely in the interest of all.

This is the very substance of right living, the very soul of the religious life. But business, in one form or other, is the only avenue through which this helpful spirit can find adequate power and opportunity of expression. For the giving that helps the world is the giving that quickens and develops the world. The men who give most helpfully are those who put most of themselves—their best selves—into their gifts, and so stimulate their fellows to like Christian endeavor. And yet the Church has treated this whole field of business activity as lying properly outside the sphere of religion. The truth is that we shall never make much progress in the religious life until this whole field of business has been claimed for religion; until the Christian purpose and spirit of service have come to dominate and control the whole range of its activities, and of all activities that concern the welfare of the individual and the nation.

The historical interpretation of Christianity has made it a sectional and partial religion, utterly unlike that universalism and impartialism proclaimed by Jesus.

In the first place, we have been taught to localize the Object of worship. True, we have been told that God is a spirit, almighty, all-wise, and everywhere present; yet the whole drift of the current teaching, as embodied in creed and sermon, has been to make men feel that God is not here in any real sense, that He makes His home in some glorious heaven far

removed from the sights and sounds of earth, and that the whole visible world with which we come in contact has somehow, through the sinfulness of man, been so marred and disfigured that God has withdrawn Himself from it. But "this traditional conception of God, which has come down to us from the Middle Ages through the Latin Church, is undergoing a profound transformation. The idea that God is transcendent, not only exalted above the world by His moral perfection, but separated from it by the infinite reaches of space, is yielding to the idea of Deity as immanent in His creation." When this thought shall have taken full possession of the mind, there will be no room for the secularism that now holds the Church in bondage and excludes the spirit of religion from the principal activities of life. Men will then see that this present world is just as truly God's world, and this present time just as really His time, as any other world or any other time. They will see, too, that any use of this world, or any use of this time, that does not tend to form in us those elements of character which put us at one with the Highest, cannot be a right use. They will see that such use cannot serve any real interest of our being; that it cannot by any possibility put us in harmony with ourselves, with each other, or with the universe about us; and so they will see that the fundamental assumption of secularism is false. They will see, too, that any treatment of this present world that assumes its exclusive relation to the bodily life, or to so much of life simply as we may know through the senses, leaves out of the account its very richest and highest power of ministration. And they will also see that

even the power of sensuous enjoyment is greatly lessened and dwarfed when the appetites and passions are not made subservient to the higher life of reason, affection, and worship.

The serious charge to be made against the Church at this point is that its general teaching has tended to confirm the secularist in his view. It has encouraged him to believe that so far as the present world is concerned, he has the best of it, and that if it were not for the risk he is running of incurring an eternity of misery, there would be no reason, certainly no adequate reason, for a change on his part. It has said in effect, if not in words, "You are having your good time now. We are content to fare hardly now, but we shall have our good time by and by," — the most pernicious of all heresies to be preached to the young.

It is not disputed that the Christian life is largely a denial of lower cravings in the interest of the higher, of immediate gratifications in the interest of permanent satisfactions; but denial because this course is necessary to real life here and now, and not simply on account of its bearing on our happiness or misery in the world to come. This self-denial is required in the interest of righteousness, and a state of righteousness is a state of life and peace always and everywhere.

Again, current teaching has encouraged the secular spirit to claim six days out of seven for its own special uses, and has asked of it one day only out of seven for the service of religion. Of course it is not meant that the Church has countenanced dishonesty, trickery, or sharp-dealing, or that it has wholly failed to

rebuke these things. What is meant is that the Church has not recognized the business activities of the six days as any real part of religious duty. It has not thought of this as a part of that religious and fraternal service to which Christianity calls us, and so it has contented itself with requiring men to be reasonably honest, and to make a Christian use of the gains which business has brought them. But if the Church has any right to go so far, it has a right to go a great deal farther. It has a right to say, "All time belongs to God. Not one day out of seven alone is His; all days are His, and all are to be used in the furtherance of His kingdom and the diffusion of His spirit. As a Christian you must carry the same high purpose of service and the same holy spirit of love and brotherhood into your place of business that you take into your prayer-meeting. You must at least have the welfare of your brother in all that you do. You must seek diligently, earnestly, devoutly, how best to serve him. You must realize that your chief opportunities of service lie in these business channels, and all your thinking and planning should be how to make these most available for truly human uses."

Do you say that "such a purpose and spirit as this are utterly impracticable in the world of business as it is to-day; that they would speedily bring financial ruin to any man who should allow himself to be swayed by them"? Then it should be replied: "This is the clearest possible evidence that the secular spirit has control of business, and that its control is not consistent with the welfare of the people. It is a clear indication that no remedy for existing social

evils is possible until the power of this secular spirit is broken." The question is whether professing Christians have faith enough in the Christ-purpose and spirit of life to carry these into the world of business, and under their guidance and inspiration so remodel our industrial and commercial systems as to put them in line with Christian requirements.

Is it said that "This thought of the sacredness of all time for holy or truly human uses is in too lofty a realm to win practical recognition from the common people; and that the only probable outcome of its advocacy would be a more general disregard of the one day in seven now devoted to religious uses; that the people, instead of levelling up, would level down, and so not only degrade the Sabbath, but the whole week"? We reply, the thought that all time belongs to God, and is to be used in working with Him, is the true one. If true, it is our duty to receive and teach it. Duty is ours; consequences are God's. The Church has always feared to take away the human props by which it has sought to support the morality of the nation, and invariably holds on to them until they become a weight and drag on that which they were meant to support. Religious sanctions do not concern themselves with one day above another, or with one place above another. All time and all places are held by religion to holy, that is, to truly human, uses. Therefore Christianity as such has no holy day, as it has no holy place. The observance of the Christian Sunday as a day of rest and spiritual communion grew out of man's need of such rest and of the special opportunities for communion which such season of rest affords. The

transfer was made from the seventh day of the week to the first at a time when the Christian community were well emancipated from the thought of holy days and holy places; when they were coming to regard every day alike; when it was a matter of indifference to them, so far as the sacredness of the day was concerned, whether they met for worship and communion on the seventh day or on the first. They came gradually to celebrate the first day rather than the seventh, because they believed that on that day their Master reappeared to the disciples. So they called it the Lord's day. This act of the Early Church was a distinct repudiation on its part of the Judaic doctrine of seventh-day sacredness. That it came to celebrate the first with growing regularity, and as it grew popular and worldly, to more and more confine its worship to this day, was natural. As society is organized to-day, perhaps the custom is the best that it could have. The world is likely to hold on to it for some time to come, — not, however, on the ground of any express Scriptural sanction, nor on that of the Early Church's example, but on grounds of need, of convenience, of utility. The danger is not that business shall more and more encroach on this day, but that the low ideas of life, as pleasure, indulgence, which rule men on other days, shall come to dominate them on this. The remedy for this, however, is not a revival of the sanctity of Sunday, but a more powerful and persistent presentation of the thought that all time is sacred to human uses. Men must be made to feel as they never have felt, and can never be made to feel while ruled by the old conception, that only those uses that serve the *man* are human uses.

To pander to the animal is not to serve the man ; but so to care for and nourish the lower as to make it the servant of the higher, constitutes a truly human use. Men must be made to see that our bodies are temples for the indwelling of a holy spirit, and that only as this spirit abides with us and presides in all our recreations, pleasures, amusements, can we find that harmony and fulness of life which is the craving of every heart. Men need to feel that every passion, every appetite, which belongs to the real nature of man is divinely given, but given as fire is given, to be a servant, not a master. To give them loose rein is simply to become gluttonous, licentious, brutal. To hold them in restraint and to their proper uses, is to make them subservient to life in the largest and divinest meaning of the term.

The power to do this cannot come from the secular spirit. It is not in this spirit. It must come from the Christian spirit,—the spirit of holiness and love, of service and of joy. We need at least our one day in seven, under our present industrial system, to give us strength and guidance for the duties of the other six. But the influence of this day will hinder rather than help, if we do not gather from it the impression that all life, whether of the shop or the street, the office or the home, is to be lifted to the same plane of brotherly service, of loving ministry, as our loftiest Sunday thought or our most fervent Sunday prayer. It has always pleased me that the people hold the minister to a high standard of duty ; that they would scorn to employ a man who should frankly confess to them : “I am in this profession to serve myself ; in other words, for what I can get out of it. I don’t especially like it, and I haven’t any purpose of devoting

myself particularly to the service of others. But I have some gifts as a public speaker, and have been educated for this kind of work. I know pretty well what will take with the people, and I am prepared to give it to them. If you want a man who can draw a congregation, hold it, entertain it, and draw from it an ample revenue for all current expenses, I think I can suit you." The average church committee—though in matters of business living precisely on this plane themselves—would be shocked by such an avowal on the part of a minister, and I am glad of it. I recognize the soundness of the moral sense in this revulsion. But I would hold the people—all of them; I care not what their occupation—to the very standard of duty to which they hold me. I deny their right to enter any calling or occupation with any other purpose or in any other spirit than that which they require of me. I want every man to make his calling a ministry. I want him to feel that he is in it, not simply for what he can get out of it, but for what of genuine service he can render the world through it. And there is no calling in life that meets any real need of body or soul which does not afford opportunity for divinest service, and so for growth through this spirit of service into closest fellowship with God. Right here, dear reader, is all the difference between the religious and the secular spirit. The one works in conscious union with God in the service of the brother. The other works with no thought of union with the Divine, and no purpose of any service but that of self. And these two spirits, brought out in character and embodied in society, make all the difference between heaven and hell.

VI.

THEORIES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION.

BY PRESIDENT O. CONE, D.D.

GERMAR said in 1821, in the introduction to his work on Biblical Interpretation,¹ which happily has exerted no great influence, that the investigation and criticism of the prevalent methods of interpretation is rendered extremely difficult by the fact that their principle and system are seldom definitely declared, more seldom appear in a pure form, and most rarely find a consistent application. This remark would not be amiss if applied to a great part of the work which passes for Biblical interpretation at the present day. The current expositions of Scripture, whether they proceed from the pulpit or the chair of Theology, are for the most part vitiated by the absence of a clear conception in their authors of a hermeneutical *method*, or by the failure to carry out a right method to its logical results, if one happens at all to be applied. Theology, grammar, allegory, philology, typology, mysticism, and edification contribute, each a share, to intensify the confusion; or if a fruitful principle of interpretation is haply discerned and employed at the outset, its consistent application is too often defeated by a timid conservatism, which beats a retreat the moment the system

¹ Die Panharmonische Interpretation der Heiligen Schrift, von Friedr. Heinr. Germar, Schleswig, 1821.

of theology to which it is committed, is seen to be in danger.

This paper cannot be a treatise on hermeneutics, nor a history of hermeneutical theories. Its object will be accomplished if a study and correct estimate of the principal erroneous methods of Biblical interpretation shall be made, and the right method so clearly set forth and so well defended as to secure the favorable judgment of the reader.

With regard to the definition of interpretation, or hermeneutics, it is not necessary here to discuss the authorities and to decide whether one ought to hold with Ernesti¹ that it is the science of clearly comprehending and *explaining* the sense of an author, or with Schleiermacher² that it is limited to teaching what the interpreter has to observe in order to put *himself* in possession of the thought of the writer to be interpreted. The right understanding of what one reads is certainly first in order and importance; and for the object at present in view Immer's³ definition is sufficient, "The science of removing the differences between us and the writer." In order to remove this difference we must put ourselves in the writer's place and realize his situation, his mode of thought, his degree and quality of culture, the readers whom he addressed, and the object which he had in view. All this is evidently something more than understanding the writer's words in their ordinary meaning and grammatical connection. We must occupy his intellectual point of view, appreciate his spirit and

¹ *Institutio Interpretis*, N. T. 1761.

² *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, von Lücke, 1838.

³ *Hermeneutik des N. T.* 1873. (Eng. transl. Andover, 1877).

prejudices, have clearly before us the effect which he aimed to produce, and enter into his emotions, feeling his fervor or his coldness. To read his lines is not enough; we must read what is unwritten and lies between the lines. So the accomplished actor interprets the dramatist. He who will interpret a satirist must become a satirist. He who will interpret Homer must become a Greek of the Heroic Age. He who will interpret the later Isaiah must become an impassioned Jew of the Exile, full of the zeal of the theocracy and the enthusiasm of the Restoration.

Too much emphasis cannot be put upon the necessity that the interpreter free himself from prepossessions both for and against the writer and his opinions. He should regard the writing as a fact apart, which he is to judge without interest in its relation to his preconceptions. A strong prepossession for, and a strong prejudice against, a writer are almost equally disturbing influences. The mind of the interpreter must be hospitable enough to welcome and duly appreciate a thought of the writer which is opposed to his own convictions and to what he wishes to find. He must not so hold the writer in contempt as not to receive gladly a great truth from him, nor so honor him as to be led to do violence to a sound hermeneutics by an attempt to explain away his errors or irrational conclusions. If he may not assume the author whom he is to interpret to be an untrustworthy guide, neither may he assume him to be an infallible oracle; since whether he is the one, or the other, or neither, is a question to be answered by the results of interpretation, and not a presupposition which should be allowed to influence its

conclusions. For the same reason the interpreter may not allow a tradition concerning a book, or a writing, nor any claims of its author to inspiration or infallibility, to affect his procedure by betraying him into unworthy expedients to modify the literal sense of a passage in order to save the writer's assumed reputation. The author's reputation must be determined by the conclusions of a fair and correct interpretation, which alone can sift his claims. It is the task of hermeneutics, for example, to decide how the claim of the writers of the Old Testament to speak by the "Word of God" should be regarded. For it is only by that process of interpretation which is called "historical" that it can be determined whether or no the view which they held of God's relation to the world led them to ascribe the operations of their own minds to an immediate Divine agency. The interpreter will be able to solve this problem when he shall have removed the difference between himself and the author by correctly estimating the latter's point of view, putting himself in his place, realizing his theology and his theory of the world, and throwing off the subtle influence of his own prepossessions and opinions.

These considerations should not, however, prejudice the reader against what may be called the *sympathetic* factor in interpretation. It is consistent with the rigorous requirement of an independent and unbiased attitude of the interpreter toward the writer to be interpreted to affirm that the former should be in sympathy with the latter, according to the principle that only kindred minds can fully understand each other. Sympathy with his author on the part

of a hermeneut is an indispensable condition of interpretation. It is a sign that one of the barriers, or differences, which might separate the two does not exist. Only one having a poetic sense can interpret a poet; only one having a philosophic sense, a philosopher. This condition does not imply a prepossession, but rather a natural preparation. The interpreter of the Bible should possess the literary sense in its largest meaning, and in addition to this a sense for religion. These are indispensable qualifications.

A study of erroneous methods of interpretation naturally begins with the oldest, the *Allegorical*. This may be defined, from ἀλλὰ ἀγορεύειν, to say other things, as interpreting a passage to mean what it does not mean. It admits of no justification, and scarcely of Immer's feeble palliation that it assumes that the Bible contains the truth and that this does not always lie on the surface. For if the Bible contains the truth, it is the task of hermeneutics to find it where it is, not to attempt to make it appear where it is not. The principle of the allegorizing interpretation is, the Scriptures being inspired of God can have only worthy and important contents; whatever in them appears according to its literal or grammatical meaning to be unimportant, contrary to reason or good morals, contradictory to any other passage, or in any way objectionable, must be made to say something else (ἀλλὰ ἀγορεύειν), in order to save the honor, consistency, and infallibility of the sacred writings. This amounts to saying that the writers of the Bible did not use words in their ordinary acceptance in human intercourse, but propounded riddles,

which only those can guess who hold the allegorical key. They did not really mean to say what they appear to say, whenever their words seem to the interpreter to be trivial or unworthy of God. But whenever they wrote what he thinks they ought to have written, as organs of the Deity, he will take them at their word.

The root of all evil in allegorizing is a preconceived dogma concerning the Bible which is made to dominate the whole process. Accordingly, allegorizing is not really interpretation at all, but a wresting of the Biblical writings to make them say what it is beforehand determined that they ought to say. The character of the principle appears more strikingly in its origin than in its application. Whether it appeared first in Greece or in Alexandria, the circumstances of its rise were similar. An ancient book which tradition hallows and the people reverence is subjected to the scrutiny of an age of reflection and philosophy, — as it happened to the Homeric poems in the age of Grecian enlightenment, and to the Old Testament when the Jewish religion met Hellenic culture in Alexandria. It was thought, very unwisely indeed, that instead of regarding the poems of Homer, with their mythologies and legends, as a beautiful product of the imagination brought forth in the age of myth, and leaving them to be judged and appreciated as such, it was necessary to save the great poet from ridicule by allegorizing his wonderful creations. He must be made to mean something that he did not mean. Accordingly, Jove and his Olympian court are dissolved into thin air, and the “far-darting Apollo” is disarmed of his silver bow. In like

manner, Philo of Alexandria, instead of leaving the Old Testament in its poetic and religious grandeur and simplicity, — a record of the struggles of a wonderful race with the problems of life, as it groped in depths of great darkness or mounted heights of marvellous light, — thought he could defend it against the sneers of Grecian culture by attempting to show that it contained all the philosophy of Aristotle and as much recondite wisdom besides as he could allegorize into it. So at the touch of this hermeneutical magician's wand the fine Hebrew legends go up in allegoric mist. It is "impiety" to take literally the words "God planted a paradise in Eden." The meaning is that God plants terrestrial virtue in the human race. God did not make Eve of one of Adam's ribs. The meaning is that He took the power which dwells in the outward senses and led it to the mind. "Metrodorus of Lampsacus, in his treatise concerning Homer, has argued very foolishly, turning everything into allegory," says Tatian. With as much truth it may be said of Philo and his imitators in the Christian Church, that they have "argued very foolishly." The root of the foolishness in both cases is essentially the same, — *Homerolatry* on the one hand, *Bibliolatry* on the other.

Archdeacon Farrar's words of palliation and warning in reference to this system of so-called interpretation may appropriately be introduced here as a hint of the reason why so much space is given to its consideration in this place: —

"Allegory in Philo's day was not an intentional falsification nor a hypocritical subterfuge. It was a phase of

thought which seemed to be inevitable in the education of the world. It is more astonishing and would be more culpable — if we could ever call men culpable for not rising superior to the religious opinions of their age — that Philo's methods, teeming as they do with impossibilities, and based as they are on the shifting sand, should yet have been adopted and practised by Christian commentators for thousands of years after the high-minded Alexandrians had passed away.”¹

It is precisely because the allegorical method has vitiated so much of the interpretation in the Christian Church, from Barnabas and Origen to Lange and the Speaker's Commentary, that its consideration requires a large space in a discussion of hermeneutical theories which aims to lead the reader to reject those that are false and adopt those that are true.

With the exception of the Antiochian School of Exegesis, allegorizing was the prevailing method of interpretation until the time of the Reformation. It began in Christian literature with the writers of the New Testament in their interpretation of the Old Testament, in the interest of maintaining the intimate connection of the two “dispensations,” and of making Christianity acceptable to the Jews as a “fulfilment” of the law and the prophets. Paul interprets the Old Testament as prefiguring the conditions and events of Christian history, making the domestic circumstances of Abraham an “allegory” typical of the “two covenants,” and the Hebrew law respecting marriage a “mystery” pointing to the Christian

¹ History of Interpretation, by F. W. Farrar, D.D. New York, 1886, p. 155. Reviewed in Universalist Quarterly, April, 1887.

Church. Adam is a type (τύπος) of Christ, and events of Hebrew history are regarded as happening in the way of "ensamples" (τυπικῶς, τύποι) for the Christians. The rock, from which water is said to have flowed for the thirsty Israelites in the desert, is to the allegorizing apostle no common rock, but a spiritual one, a πέτρα πνευματική, which allegorically prefigured Christ, the source of living water. Even the injunction in the Old Testament against muzzling "the ox that treadeth out the corn" is allegorized by Paul, and declared not to have been written for oxen, since God does not "care" for them, but for the apostles as laborers worthy of their hire. In the Acts (xiii. 35) Paul is represented as referring the Psalmist's expression of confidence in God as the Preserver of his life, who would not abandon His servant to sheol and the grave, to the resurrection of Christ.¹ Peter uses with equal *abandon* the typological allegorizing in Acts ii. 25, when he quotes the Psalmist's exulting song of faith in the Divine presence and support: "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved," as prophetic of Christ. The writers of the Gospels pursue a similar course, seeking to establish the Messianic dignity of Christ by an allegorical exegesis of Old Testament passages. They appear unable to believe in him on account of himself, of his wonderful witness to the truth, or even "for the very works' sake," but to feel the necessity of grasping for some external confirmation of his mission. Hence their frequent appeals to the Jewish sacred writings,

¹ "Have we a Biblical Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead?" *Universalist Quarterly*, July, 1884, p. 179.

which they regarded as inspired. That they could make them serve their purpose only by a forced and arbitrary interpretation, did not deter them from explaining the most ordinary events in the life of Jesus as happening "in order that it might be fulfilled," as it had somewhere been written concerning totally different circumstances in their sacred Scriptures. There is a *naïveté* in their allegorizing which is incompatible with the theory that they were conscious of wresting the passages which they thus interpreted from their proper meaning, or proceeding in any way contrary to a legitimate hermeneutics. Children of their age, and inheriting the traditions of the Jewish method of interpretation, they could hardly have proceeded otherwise without a miracle, — without giving incontestable evidence of a hermeneutical inspiration.

The fact that the writers of the New Testament have made so extensive a use of the hermeneutical method in question has undoubtedly exerted a great influence upon the interpretation which Christian theologians have applied both to the Old Testament and to the very writings in which they have found the example set for them. The apostles and evangelists have suffered from precisely the sort of allegorizing by which they unwittingly perverted the law and the prophets. There is, however, as Farrar intimates as to Philo and his disciples in the passage previously quoted from him, this difference between the writers of the New Testament and the modern imitators of their hermeneutics, that the former knew no better than to interpret as they did, but that the latter ought to know better than to follow them. Ernesti, while disapproving of the typological interpretation,

which is a form of the allegorical, indicates the root of the evil in question when he lays down the principle that we may accept so many types as the writers of the New Testament recognize. In regard to this teaching it may be said, that if typology is disallowed on principle, there is no reason why its application should be permitted to one class of interpreters and denied to all others. If it be said that the writers of the New Testament were inspired in their hermeneutics and accordingly could not err in grammar, history, or philology, then let the answer be that this is exactly the sort of assumption which vitiated the interpretation of these very writers in their treatment of the Old Testament. The question whether or no they were inspired in their interpretation of the law and the prophets, cannot be answered by a presumption, but only by an interpretation of these same writings according to historical and grammatical principles, and a comparison of its results with those of their hermeneutics. But instead of critically sifting this method of ancient origin and revered sanction, it must be laid to the charge of the majority of Christian theologians, that they have blindly followed it and disregarded the historical relations and meaning of Old Testament passages in an eager pursuit after types and prophecies of Jesus Christ.¹

That there are allegories in the Bible no one competent to judge will deny. Wherever they exist they were intended as such by the writers, and the discovery of the intention of an author is an important

¹ On this subject see "The Dogmatic Use of the Old Testament in the New." *Universalist Quarterly*, April, 1869; and "Messianic Prophecy," January, 1888.

factor in the interpretation of him. There is also much other figurative language in the Bible, the understanding of which requires a good literary sense. Now, figures of speech are well known to students of rhetoric, and are capable of being named and classified; and whenever an interpreter asserts that a Biblical passage contains a figure, he should be able to name and classify it among tropes, or adopt another rendering. One of the grossest and most incorrigible offences against good hermeneutics is that of charging up to "figurative language" all passages which, literally interpreted, create a "difficulty." To say that the Evangelists, when they make Christ proclaim his coming in the clouds of heaven in their own generation, were conscious of employing a figure of the destruction of Jerusalem, or of an end of the world future to the nineteenth century, is to put altogether too much upon figures, to say nothing of the burden of Jerusalem. Likewise, if Paul, writing in the soberest prose of the great Christophany which he expected to behold, and of the trumpet-call that should awake the dead, intended to be understood tropically of a spiritual coming, or of anything but the longed-for personal *parousia* of his Master, then are there no principles of language sacred against theological trifling, and interpretation is a matter quite too trivial and uncertain to occupy earnest minds.¹

¹ A striking illustration of the persistence of dogmatic prepossession is furnished in the reluctance of the admission, written apparently in tears, by Dean Alford, that Paul believed in a personal coming of Christ. See his remarks on the passages in question in his Greek Testament, with Commentary, etc. Lange and his co-laborers have rendered a similar service to a sound hermeneutics in their treatment of these passages.

The *Dogmatic* method of interpretation can only give a true hermeneutical result by chance, because the conclusions which it will reach are predetermined to a considerable degree by the presumption that the Biblical writings have been so carefully guarded by Divine inspiration as not to admit of errors of any kind, whether chronological, historical, logical, or doctrinal. It disregards entirely the historical development of the Bible, the different points of view of the several writers, and the psychological insight by which the interpreter is put in possession of the mind of his author. It assumes that the Bible constitutes a unity of Divine revelation, every part of which is in complete agreement with every other part, — that it is a “Codex of Revelation,” and that whenever, according to the grammatical sense and the ordinary meaning and connection of words, a disagreement appears, it must be made to disappear, no matter by what arbitrary procedures. Another presupposition, that the Bible supports the creed of the Church, or is in harmony with the “Christian consciousness,” has long dominated interpretation greatly to its detriment. Its most glaring manifestation was shortly after the Reformation. The reformers began well with their hermeneutics by opposing the traditional doctrine of the manifold sense of Scripture with that of the *clearness* of the Bible according to its grammatical meaning, and for a short time there was promise of a true exegetical reform, beside the other reforms of the time. But the consolidation of a system of theology in the Reformed Church soon bound interpretation with the fetters of dogmatism, and it became a settled maxim with the interpreters that nothing must be

found in the Bible which favored views opposed to the established Orthodoxy. If anything was found there which did not appear to agree with the confessions and the great authorities of the Church, it must be "exegetically pressed" until it yielded the desired sense. At the same time the whole Bible was ransacked for proof-texts, which, in their turn, were in like manner "pressed," so that the sacred writings were degraded to the base and unfruitful uses of an arsenal of dogmatic weapons, offensive and defensive. Unhappily, sectarian interest and strife have contributed to maintain such perverting presumptions down to the present time, and the Bible is still interpreted by many as if it were a foregone conclusion that no one of its writers could have had convictions opposed to the interpreter's favorite dogma.

An ancient principle of Biblical interpretation is that its results must agree with the Rule of Faith (*Regula Fidei*). Ernesti's statement of it is that "we ought to keep in view the analogy of Scripture and of the doctrine therein revealed; so that no interpretation be approved of which produces a sense contrary to that doctrine; and that in difficult passages which appear to oppose it, the interpretation be accommodated to it."¹ This theory rests upon the presumption of the unity of the Bible,—its entire agreement in all its parts. But whether such unity and agreement exist or not can only be known as the result of a complete interpretation. Hence, the presumption is groundless; for it is illogical to set up as a rule to govern interpretation a principle which

¹ *Institutio Interpretis*. English translation, by Terrot, i. 127. Edinburgh, 1843.

the interpretation itself can alone verify. Besides, how can a difficult passage be explained by the "analogy of Scripture," the passage in question being a *part* of Scripture from which the "analogy" is deduced? The "analogy of Scripture" cannot be an analogy derived from all passages *minus* the difficult ones, since these may contain doctrines which would entirely change the analogy. Nor can it be allowed, as a general principle, that difficult passages may be explained by those that are clear, since this procedure has no other support than the groundless presumption of the unity of Scripture, already mentioned. A modicum of truth remains, however, after sifting this principle of the Rule of Faith, and that is, that obscure passages in a *single writer* may be explained by his own clear statements when both relate to the same subject, or kindred subjects, if there be no reason for believing him to have changed his opinions. This may be allowed on the principle that a writer expects to be understood, and is consistent with himself throughout his treatise. There is, however, no *presumption* here, but an *induction* from human nature and experience. The difference between the two points of view is obvious, and its importance cannot be too strongly emphasized.

As a natural reaction against allegorizing and dogmatizing, the *Rationalistic* method of interpretation has widely prevailed. Its principle is that the Bible must be in accordance with reason. It is evident that its results cannot but be as certainly predetermined by its point of view as are those of the dogmatic method, of which it is in fact a modification; for to affirm that the Bible accords with reason is as

bald a presumption as that of its infallibility. In both cases, a theory is set up as a guiding principle of hermeneutics, which only the results of a complete interpretation can establish. To press a text, in order to make it conform to reason, is as illogical and unscientific as to resort to hermeneutical juggling in any other dogmatic interest. Unscientific it certainly is, apart from the question of presumption, to set up so inconstant a standard as that of the human reason for a rule of interpretation, — a standard which varies with individuals, peoples, and times. If the hermeneutical aim is to ascertain, not what the writers of the Bible said, but what different men in different times and of dissimilar culture think to be in accordance with "reason," no more suitable method than this could be devised. Kant's principle of the Moral Interpretation occupies the same point of view; but it does not appear from his exposition of it, what reason there is for maintaining that, because the moral bettering of man is the object of religion, "it must contain the supreme principle of Biblical interpretation." Kant was frank enough to admit that "the sense arrived at by this method is not, indeed, to be given out as that had in mind by the author," but he does not indicate by what process of reasoning it can be shown that deriving from a writer a meaning which he did not have in mind may properly be called interpretation. Obviously the presumption that the writings of the Biblical canon are altogether promotive of morality is no more tenable, as a hermeneutical point of view, than the presumptions previously considered. Under the rationalistic interpretation belong Paulus's naturalistic explanation of the miracles

of the New Testament, and related expositions of them, which proceed upon the assumption that there are no supernatural events. But a presumption against supernaturalism has no place in interpretation. The question for the interpreter, as such, is what the writer intended to set forth, — as, for example, whether or no the author of the first Gospel meant to say that, at the time of the crucifixion, the graves were opened and the dead arose and came forth upon the streets; or, the author of the fourth Gospel, that Jesus actually raised Lazarus from the dead. The question for him is, “Did these writers wish to be understood as relating these occurrences for facts, or did they intend them as symbols of some more or less obscure spiritual events?” Such questions as concern the supernatural in general; the adequacy of testimony to sustain the evangelical accounts of miracles; the probability, or improbability, that legends of the birth and history of Christ were for some time in circulation before the Gospels were written, and were uncritically narrated in them, — belong to metaphysical and historical investigation, and are only indirectly related to the task of the interpreter, which is to ascertain the intention and meaning of the writer. By a presumption for or against the supernatural, the interpreter must not allow himself to be influenced. He must rigorously distinguish between the two questions, — what the writer whom he interprets actually said, and whether what he said is true or false.

The point of view which has been defended by implication in the foregoing critical study of hermeneutical methods, is that of the Grammatical and

Historical, or the Grammatico-historical, method of interpretation. Although to some extent adopted and carried out by the Antiochian School of Exegesis, it may be regarded as the latest product of the human mind in this field of intellectual endeavor, and the consummation of a long and often apparently hopeless struggle with the problems of Biblical interpretation. This is the only hermeneutical method which is entirely free from presumptions. It begins by regarding the Bible as a historical fact, which is to be treated, like all other historical facts, according to the general principles of the investigation of such phenomena. Its principle is that the Bible, being a collection of ancient writings, should be studied, like all other writings of its class, by the application of historical, archæological, and linguistic knowledge; and that it must abide the result of a rigorous and conscientious employment of these helps of research. It sets out upon its investigations with the unquestionable fact that the several books of the Biblical canon were written by men in the language of men. From this point of view, arriving—by induction from facts relating to writers in general—at the conclusion that the writers in question intended to be understood, and hence must have used words in their ordinary meaning, the grammatical and historical interpreter proceeds to treat the Bible as literature. Now to treat the Bible as literature is to interpret it according to the general principles which are applied in the understanding of all literary productions; that is, according to the universal laws of thought and language. It is obvious, then, that the grammatical interpreter does not recognize a distinction between “sacred” and “profane” literature,

in the sense that the two literatures require a different hermeneutical treatment. Accordingly, he cannot accept Ernesti's doctrine, that where in profane literature facts and reason oppose the sense of the words, "a fault in the copy or an error in the author" is to be presumed; but where in the sacred Books there is found anything opposed to ordinary opinion, there is to be acknowledged "the weakness of human intelligence;" for this instruction goes upon the presumption that the Biblical writers were supernaturally guarded from error, and hence did not write by human understanding. Their productions, then, could not belong to literature, and could not be interpreted according to any standards known to men, but only by some *unknown* Divine standard. Let the paradox be allowed,—for it is a paradoxical position in which this great authority places us. The interpreter who goes upon the presumption of the "weakness of his intelligence" has surely mistaken his calling.

He who sets up the theory that the Bible should not be interpreted by the same general principles which govern the interpretation of all other literature, may fairly be called upon to sustain this presumption. This he can do only by showing that the Bible does not belong to literature; that it was not produced in the ordinary way of producing literary works, but is a product of the Divine Mind, or Divinely inspired. But in order to show this, he must make a complete interpretation of its writings, since only by an interpretation can its character be revealed. By what method? Certainly not by the method applied to literature in general, since this is excluded by the conditions of the case. He can, then,

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only employ a method suited to his theory, and the correctness of this would be another presumption,—the sole support of the original one! If the words of the Biblical writers are not to be understood in the ordinary meaning of words, and as they are related and connected in literature according to the universal laws of thought, then are there no general principles on which interpretation can proceed; there is no resort except to the caprice of each interpreter, and exegesis is launched upon a boundless sea of arbitrariness and fancy.

The principle that words are to be taken in their “ordinary sense” is not however to be understood, in this method of interpretation, without qualification. But the qualification constitutes no exception to the doctrine of the method. It is rather a rule of its correct application, which is calculated to guard against the vagaries of allegorizing on the one hand, and a mechanical and “flat” exegesis on the other. By a special application of the principles of General Hermeneutics, the interpreter of a Biblical writing according to this method regards that writing as a product of its age, and determines the meaning of the words *historically* and *psychologically*; that is to say, he takes into account the historical circumstances, or causes, which have modified the meaning of certain words, and the ideas in the mind of the writer which have determined him to use them in a particular sense, and in no other. Accordingly, the grammatical and historical interpreter of the Old Testament considers the historical mission and development of the Jewish people, and their theocratic and religious beliefs. Interpreting the New Testament, he keeps

in view the influence which Christianity exerted upon the meaning of many words in the Greek language by its doctrines of repentance (*μετάνοια*), faith (*πίστις*), grace (*χάρις*), life (*ζωή*), death (*θάνατος*), and numerous others, and explains them accordingly. To interpret these words only according to their meaning in classic Greek usage would be deemed by him as glaring a fault as to allegorize them, or seek to make them yield a two-fold, or three-fold, or a "deeper" sense; for, according to this method, words have precisely and only the "depth" of meaning corresponding to, and adapted to express, the depth of the ideas in the writer's mind. When the interpreter has made himself master of the literature with which he is dealing, and of the range of ideas, the feelings, and aims of its author, according to the historical and psychological procedure previously referred to, he has accomplished the most difficult and most important part of his task.

The grammatical and historical method of interpretation has been by some regarded with suspicion, and opposed as rationalistic, and as laying so much stress upon critical researches, refinements of grammar, and investigations in history, that those who employ it are in danger of neglecting the sense and spirit of the Biblical writers. If to use the faculty of reason in its highest exercise, and in one of the most difficult fields of investigation, be rationalistic, then this method is such; and to those who on this ground object to it can only be commended one which dispenses with reason. But the rationalistic method is, as it has been shown, dominated by a presumption, while it is the principle of this method that no pre-

sumption shall be allowed to influence the result. In regard to the other objection mentioned, Immer says, that "It is not to be denied that the purely objective position of the interpreter, with reference to his author, could easily degenerate into indifference to what he says, and this into inability to understand."¹ It is not quite clear what this very candid and liberal hermeneut means by the words, "objective position of the interpreter." Psychologically speaking, the interpreter is subject and his author, object; and it would seem that the more completely the latter is made an object, the more successfully he could be studied; and that the more he diminishes and disappears, the more likely would the former be to employ precisely that subjective and arbitrary hermeneutics which Immer himself disapproves. But if he means that the interpreter may, perhaps, if he pursue this method, not merge himself with his author, or put himself in his place, and thus not remove to a degree the relation of subject and object, then it should be said that this result is not justly chargeable to the method, but to a wrong application of its principles; for it is the doctrine of this method that the interpreter must so realize his author, historically and psychologically, as completely to enter into his situation and spirit. It is a faulty use of the method which leads him so exclusively to dwell upon externals as to make this impossible. All that is of worth in the spiritual or pneumatic theory of interpretation, which emphasizes the necessity of a religious preparation to a good interpreter of the Bible, as well as all that can be demanded in the interest of a sympathetic herme-

¹ Hermeneutik, p. 70 (Eng. transl., p. 87).

neutics, finds a place and an adequate appreciation in this method, and is, indeed, in no other completely provided for.

If it should be maintained by any one that the requirement of the Grammatical and Historical method, that Biblical interpretation be undertaken and carried on without presumptions, is too severe; that it demands, indeed, an impossibility; that the traditions of the Bible, coming down through many centuries, and the general opinion concerning it in Christendom cannot but bias the interpreter; and that Christian history does, in fact, constitute an irresistible presumption,—to all this the answer is, that while the Christian interpreter cannot, indeed, avoid such influences,—cannot escape from Christianity,—and should not attempt to do so, the requirement which is made of him, the principle by which he is rigorously bound, is, that he must permit no presumption to *determine* his hermeneutics. An expert in ores, called upon to examine metals taken from a mine, might not shut his ears to reports, wide-spread and believed by many, that it contained gold, and would perhaps entertain a presumption that the rumor was well-founded; but, proceeding scientifically, he would test the materials from the mine as if neither rumor nor presumption existed. In like manner the Biblical interpreter, setting to work as an expert and according to a scientific method, must not allow any ancient tradition, modern belief, or personal interest to *govern* his procedure and predetermine his conclusions.

The foregoing critical study of hermeneutical methods has shown certain presumptions underlying those that are erroneous. The essential idea in all these is

that the Bible contains the Word of God to man, or, in other terms, truths of vital importance to his welfare. Now, this presupposition is not an isolated, unrelated fact, but is an effect. Is the Bible itself the cause? Somehow, whether by spiritual insight or by an interpretation of history, the conviction has been firmly fixed for many ages in the minds of the interpreters of the Bible, that it contains matter of inestimable worth, which must be sacredly guarded at all hazards. We have seen how this indestructible belief has led them into false and foolish interpretations, the story of which makes one of the saddest chapters in the intellectual history of the human race. But what if a scientific interpretation of the Bible should reveal that this presumption has all along been right? In the interest of truth the contest must still be maintained against the "presumption" as a governing principle in hermeneutics. When a scientific investigator, in search of a law among confused phenomena, sets up a hypothesis, he experiences an intense joy in finding it at length confirmed; but no one knows better than he that he did not achieve his discovery under the *control* of his hypothesis, but by relating fact with fact. So the true interpreter, while rejoicing that a right method has established at least the spirit of the old presumptions which have for ages retarded the progress of his science, will still hold fast his hermeneutical principle. In that alone, and in Reason, can he put his trust. Only by the right use of these does he hope to bring forth yet undiscovered treasures of truth from the Divine Word.

VII.

INCARNATION.

BY A. J. CANFIELD, D.D.

THE title-term of this essay is used in the sense of embodying or making manifest, not merely through the medium of flesh and blood, but generally and in every way. The base of all existence is spirit. Occurrences in the natural world are called phenomena (appearances),—a word which implies that there is something beneath and behind them which is not an appearance; that something is an invisible reality, ever seeking to be born or embodied. The process of this birth or embodiment bears different names, according as it works in matter, mind, or morals. Hence the word “incarnation,” as here employed, includes mechanical inventions, symbolic representations of ideals, and organic social institutions, on the way to its supreme theological signification of God manifested in human nature.

Thus defined, the subject may be discussed with reference to the embodiment of thought in physical forms; the personification of character in individuals; and the historic evolution of society, culminating in the sublime Christian conception of redeemed or perfected humanity, rejoicing in the consciousness of indwelling Deity.

The first two of these three departments, though full of meat, will be but lightly touched, on account of the superior importance of the latter, which relates especially to the purpose of this volume, and has to do with some of the most vital problems of the present age. It is interesting, however, to trace the rudiments of great results, as they lurk in commonplace events.

1. Let us, therefore, begin with the familiar fact of thoughts embodied in physical things. The universe itself is a magnificent revelation of ideal order and materialized conceptions. The solid fixtures of the globe were sprung into being, say the Scriptures, by a word; that word was the airy symbol of a sentiment which originated in the Infinite mind. Ingenious man, observing the wonders of the natural world and sympathizing with the devising energy of the Divine Artificer, is prompted to exercise his gift of constructive ability. Then progress becomes possible and incarnation is assured. This process commences very early. Hugh Miller informs us that in the most primitive eras of the world we find some shell or fern that embodies a thought of beauty and truth, which man, coming untold ages after, finds planted in himself as an ideal of the beautiful and true, and takes as his model when he tries to embody his own conceptions. Here is the key to the knowledge we need in order to understand the ultimate results of Providential working, and the agency of mankind therein. Viewed in this light, creation presents itself as a living unity and universal movement, where all things and all men and all deeds fall into their proper explanation. Such a classification places man midway

between the top and the bottom of the scale, thus intimately connecting him with creation and its Creator. He associates with both, but longs for companionship with the latter. That element of human nature which moulds and causes and creates, which subjects other things to its influence and determines their character and form, weaving the splendors of the sunset into the fibres of the canvas, and rearing the rocks of the mountain into architectural anthems of grandeur and aspiration, contains the promise and potency of many nobler achievements. Busy cities and toiling workshops, vocal with the hum of machinery, proclaim the power of mind over matter. Commercial industry, stretching forth its feelers and feeders—its long arms of rail, river, and canal—into the far distance, devouring for its daily needs the products of farm, forest, factory, and mine, in every corner of the globe, affords a hint of the working of an irresistible impulse which sets toward the ultimate establishment of the tabernacle of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, among men. Nothing more completely distinguishes mankind from the lower animals than the faculty of fashioning shapes of usefulness and beauty out of the raw material of rock, wood, stream, and fluent air. It may, indeed, be said that the bird, the beaver, and the bee also work upon matter. The one proceeds with the utmost accuracy to build its nest, and the other to construct its dam; but a point is soon reached at which each of these pauses and beyond which neither of them has power to go. There is no self-conscious public opinion in an ant-hill; if there were it would be a city. The busy beavers forecast no plans of the huts they build. They do nothing more remarkable,

nothing essentially different from what has been done for six or sixty thousand years. But out of this same chaotic world of unshapen matter, the human agent makes houses and weapons, ships, shops, steam-engines, and telegraphs, continually altering and improving his productions, like God Himself,

"From seeming evil still educing good,
And better thence again, and better still,
In infinite progression."

According to Lord Bacon, "founders of States and law-givers were anciently honored with the titles of demi-gods, but inventors have ever been consecrated among the Gods themselves." Inventions and artistic designs are indeed a kind of creation, a sort of physical incarnation. The Patent Office at Washington is our American Pantheon.

Whoever plans or constructs anything puts more or less of himself into it; his peculiar temper and disposition are intimately connected with the workmanship of his intellect and the thoughtfulness of his handicraft. Towns, and thoroughfares of business or pleasure, are the autobiographies of mechanics and artisans. Every dwelling-house is haunted by the ghost of him that made it.

"House hunting" in the city is an education in comparative psychology. There stands a stately mansion at the end of a gravelled walk, with a notice "To Let," upon it. You approach it with lively expectations; but the instant you cross the threshold a sense of loneliness, as of a cold breath, comes over you. The place is utterly unsuited to a person of your temperament. Another house, perhaps far less pre-

tentious, fits your mind exactly; it embodies that indescribable something which makes you feel domesticated at once.

The same is true of places of worship. You enter some churches, and though you have no acquaintances in the congregation, yet there comes over you a pleasant homelike feeling. Others, even if filled with personal friends, are always strange and unsocial. This familiar sensation is easily explained by the dispositions of the designers of the buildings—their similarity or antagonism to your own. Considerable human nature may be found incarnated in gardens. Occasionally you pass one on the outskirts of a town, where, if you can obtain a glimpse at it over the forbidding wall or through an accidental opening therein, every plant and leaf and blade of grass seems to stare at you inquiringly, as if to say, “Don’t you wish you owned me?” Then again, you come across those which are laid out and arranged with such an air of generosity that you know their proprietors to be public spirited benefactors of their kind, without asking a question.

Thus houses, churches, and gardens are either selfish, unselfish, or “so so,” just as their owners are. In like manner, every mechanical device; every triumph of art; every domestic utensil; every tool, toy, and trifle were all thoughts before they were things, and existed in somebody’s mind previous to being exhibited in the open air.

Mind mixed with flowing or evaporating water constitutes a mill. A factory is a private commercial opinion made public in matter; a Republic, an idea worked out into men. Our republican government—

its virtues and its vices — our churches, our schools, our families, —they are all the outsides of conceptions that our fathers set going a hundred or a thousand or ten thousand years ago.

United Germany is the toughened fibres of Bismarck's gigantic brain. The Russian Empire is the congealed thought of Peter the Great. Pope Gregory VII. has been dead eight hundred years, and his once powerful dust has crumbled, dissolved, and disappeared with other dust; but his indomitable will with a thought in it, still keeps every Catholic priest in the wide world from wedlock.

The whim of some Middle-Age fanatic continues to grate the windows of every nunnery in Europe. Laws and theologies are only condensed opinions. Heathenism, Judaism, Christianity, each is an emotion. Monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy are merely mental processes, clothed with the armor of organization, and sent out into the world to contend for victory.

He looks in vain who perceives in human activity nothing but material and tangible forces, or who fails to perceive the subtle influence of mind in the masterly productions of the human race.

“ For what if trade sow cities
Like shells along the shore,
And thatch with towns the prairies broad,
With railways ironed o'er?
They are but sailing foam-bells
Along *Thought's* causing stream,
And take their shape and sun-color
From Him that sends the dream.”

2. The ability, however, to embody ideas in physical forms is not the sole nor the chief qualification of mankind for becoming an agent in Divine Incarnation.

The gift for giving necessitates a corresponding receptivity to influences from without. Every individual, besides being a worker in matter, is also a personal embodiment or expression of certain traits and attributes of character, which have entered into him from anterior and extraneous sources, and without which he would be no better than Frankenstein's fabulous monster. All men owe what they are to their ancestors, plus the "divinity that shapes our ends." In the biographies of distinguished individuals a good deal of attention is always given to their ancestry. The power of a great and commanding personality is more easily understood by us when we can trace the presence of transmitted and inherited qualities.

And where immediate ancestry leaves the problem unsolved, we study the conditions of the age, and in them we find the stimulus under which men achieved greatness. There is an intimate relationship between the man and the hour. Thus great leaders appear in great emergencies, because the age finds in them its representatives, its interpreters, its executives. But genius is never an accident. Men of marked endowments usually appear at the end of a long series of legitimate causes which are summed up in them. In general, they may be said to personify and illustrate the peculiar characteristics of their constituents, whether in the family, race, or nation.

Eminent navigators are never born inland — their mothers must needs smell the sea. Phenomenal mathematicians and astronomers do not suddenly spring from savages, but are found among the most cultured races only. Socrates was a typical Athenian; and his marble thought and statuesque morality are

fit companions for the sculptures of Phidias and the paintings of Zeuxis. Julius Cæsar was the supreme citizen of the Roman Empire because her ability to manage men, her ambition and thirst for conquest, culminated and took form in him. Cromwell and Bacon are indelibly stamped with British peculiarities. Benjamin Franklin was begotten of virgin American common sense.

Some men are larger, and represent universal qualities.

Plato means everything in literature and morals; Demosthenes signifies eloquence; Cato and Regulus, stern integrity; Nero, cruelty; Napoleon, military genius; Washington, patriotism. When these names are pronounced it is like the opening of a book of sacred records, and the showing of the contents of things; they are revelations of dispositional human elements that have been stored therein for centuries. In the judgment of historians, nothing on earth is so enduring as ethnic traits and race peculiarities. It is recorded that when William Howitt went to Stratford-on-Avon to get materials for his "Homes of the English Poets," he visited, among other places, a day-school, and inquired if there were any children there in any way related to the Shakspeare family. The pedagogue replied that he had a boy in the school who was descended in a direct line from the poet's sister. Thereupon he drew the pupils up in a line, and said to his visitor, "Now, sir, pick him out." "I cast my eyes along the row of upturned faces," says Mr. Howitt, "and selecting one instantly, said, 'This is the boy,' and I was right." There was something in the lad's face that suggested Shakspeare to him.

It is also related that a few years ago an aristocratic lady, walking leisurely up the broad aisle of a picture-gallery in Paris, was respectfully accosted by an artist, who stepped out from an alcove and said, "Begging your pardon, Madam, are you a descendant of Charles the Second of England?" The lady answered with some embarrassment, "Yes, my great-grandfather was a grandson of Charles; but, Sir," she continued, "I am naturally curious to know how you came to ask me such a strange question." "Because," replied the artist, "I am engaged in copying pictures here, and having had occasion recently to copy a portrait of Charles the Second, I observed a peculiar droop of the eyelid, different from anything I ever saw before; and as you came up the gallery, I noticed exactly the droop in the eyelid that had impressed me in the picture." So the face of Shakspeare holds its own through generations of English peasants, and the Stuart eye flashes from under the same drooping lid on the dusty canvas and in the living countenance, two hundred years apart. Each tree, material or human, bears fruit after its kind. None of us stands alone; we all lean on our fathers and mothers, and they on theirs. This being the case, it would seem that man is, so to speak, both an incarnator and an incarnation. That is to say, he has power to pour his own thoughts into things and institutions, and he also conserves and embodies in himself the results of all the past. He can be, in the main, accounted for.

Now, the questions are, Was that the case with the Man of Nazareth? Can he also be brought under the law of heredity? In other words, is the religion of the New Testament simply the best fruit of human

thinking on the subjects with which it deals? Must we admit that Jesus, though confessedly the greatest of all teachers, was yet nothing but a man in his greatness, and spoke only in the name of humanity? This critical question is answered in the affirmative by many of the brightest men and women of our time. The problem has been handled with much precision in modern Lives of Christ, beginning with that of Strauss half a century ago. The attempt has been made to produce a scientific history of Christianity,—a history ignoring the supernatural, and finding the explanation of Christ's career and influence in his ancestry, his training, the social and political conditions of his age, and of succeeding ages.

On the other hand, it is contended with equal logic, that since every effect must have an adequate cause, such momentous results as have attended the progress of historic Christianity are unimpeachable evidence that something more than human nature had to do with its origin. And as this latter opinion is assertive and positive, it holds its sway in the acceptance of a vast majority of mankind, over negative doubts and tentative theories. Perhaps a larger generalization than has yet been ventured might be made to include both these extreme views. At any rate, the unique personality of Christ refuses to melt away in the crucible of modern criticism. He is not like other men. There is a residuum in his life and character which remains after making all possible allowances for inheritance and environment; and that residuum is the potent and omnipotent factor in the premises. The elimination of specific incidents does not help the matter. His discourses are as remarkable as

his wonderful works. And the text of his speech was, in almost every instance, an event or an occurrence which it is necessary to accept in order to understand the full significance of his recorded language. If his practical wisdom could be accounted for by his assumed educational advantages, there would still remain much in his unparalleled personality to challenge our attention, as it did that of his contemporaries. The doctrine of his moral and spiritual superiority was not of legendary growth. It entered into the primitive apostolic creed, and has continued to be the fundamental confession of all Christian believers. The supernal glory of the Son of Man was known to his associates from the fact that he was full of grace and truth. Their attention was fixed upon what he was, and not primarily upon what he said or did. They were impressed by his works; they were more impressed by his teachings; they were most impressed by his personal character. And subsequent history has sustained and justified that impression. The public mind to-day, with all its indifference to such matter, would turn away from any critic who should cast reproaches upon the moral integrity of the Saviour, as it would from one who should traduce the memory of Washington; and for the very same reason,—because character carries conduct, and is self-evidencing, being its own best demonstration.

It is often harder to verify the record than to accredit the person of whom the record tells. The spiritual perfection of Jesus authenticates the New Testament documents, so far as they are authenticated. The doctrine proves the miracle, if anything can, not the miracle the doctrine. A thousand

miracles would not convince us that Judas Iscariot was the Christ.

Scholars have noted a distinction between Jesus and Christ as appellative terms. Jesus might have been a man like Paul or John; but Christ is certainly something more and mightier than any individual. The Greek word "Christos" is a character-word, and stands for an assemblage of qualities and ideas which belong to the higher realms of thought and imagination. Jesus was called the Christ because he had more of those qualities than are found incarnated in other men. Christ the spirit, however, the real Christ, represents the grace and favor of God, speaking in the name and by the authority of the Infinite Reason itself. It is none other than the Divine Spirit indwelling in humanity that seeks the beautiful, the true, and the good,—the spirit of aspiration, of justice, and of charity; the spirit which was before Abraham; by which the world was made, and at whose coming the world is judged. This spirit has never been the exclusive possession of any person or party; and its presence in the New Testament is neither more nor less wonderful than its presence in other religious writings. No race has had a monopoly of moral insight. It is not of a man, but of Man; with a form as of the Son of God. It is the Son of God. To be born into the spiritual world one needs not an earthly parentage. So Christ was born of the Holy Ghost, and took the name of Jesus not in vain, as the sequel shows; for Divinity afterward streamed in loving light from his countenance, dropped beneficently from his fingers' ends, and flowed with healing power from the hem of his Hebrew garment.

The character thus introduced into the world has ever since shone through the ages like a star ; it has sailed through the murky atmosphere of theological controversy like the moon among the clouds. An essential ideal, it is yet so real that all other forms flit by it like shadows. The longer it continues the clearer it becomes, and the more effectually it influences mankind. At the outset it took possession of such institutions as were waiting to receive it, filled them as long as they were able to contain it, and then abandoned them, entering into higher forms better fitted to enlighten the expanding horizon of the soul. To-day it palpitates with the heart-beats of philanthropy, and colors with ruddy hues of hopefulness the rising tide of brotherhood which courses through the vital channels of the nations.

It is evident, therefore, that with the advent of Christ there broke into history a mighty and transforming influence, which has been, and continues to be, to other social forces what the Gulf Stream is to the currents of the ocean. The source of this influence was manifestly from above ; but the avenues of its human activity are of the earth, and often very earthy. But such as they are, they have been in process of preparation from the foundation of material things,—beginning, as we have seen, with the embodiment of thought in the primeval shell or fern, passing thence into primitive man, and issuing in the inheritance of transmitted qualities which have steadily worked their way upward, through generations and races, to meet the descending currents of spiritual unction from the Supreme Author of all being.

Science declares that all created life is one. The Incarnation illustrates how all created life ascends and enters into sympathetic contact with the uncreated and eternal life of God. Henceforth there need be no chasm in thought between God and man. Athanasius taught that "all that Jesus was and did belongs to the race of man, with which he was identical." And the Nicene doctrine of "eternal generation" expresses an undeniable fact; for God was, doubtless, generated or "begotten" in Jesus, but not in Jesus only. What we see to be Divine in him, we see to be no less Divine when shown in others. How inspiring and grand these old credal statements are, when interpreted by the light of universal truths! The Alexandrian school of philosophic theology, after being forgotten for fifteen hundred years, is coming to life again in modern liberal thought.

3. We are now in a position to trace this process of incarnation in the future possibilities of Christian society, as it sets toward the perfection of humanity, and culminates in the consciousness of indwelling Deity. Our age is pre-eminently distinguished for its multitude of humanitarian experiments, both on paper and in real life. Almost every adventurous thinker of the time,—theologian, statesman, philosopher, and professional reformer,—has tried his hand at ideal schemes for improving the condition of his fellow-men. Former periods have had their Platonic republics and poetic Arcadias, Utopias, and Oceanas written from various points of view. "Essays on New Projects" by De Foe, a "New Atlantis" conceived by Lord Bacon, and New Harmonies and Brook-Farm follies, started by Owen and others, have had their day and

disappeared. Fourier's volumes, and Leroux on Humanité, and Louis Blanc's histories and national workshops, and Proudhon's ideas of property, and the journals of Victor Considérant have gone the way of all the living. Yet they were not published in vain. Their principles and methods,—with a magical fertility akin to that of the dragon's teeth which Cadmus scattered,—have borne a plentiful harvest of socialistic theories and speculations. Henry George's famous essay on "Progress and Poverty" and Edward Bellamy's "Looking Backward" are specimens of ideas that are rapidly taking root in the popular mind, and must, before the lapse of many centuries, work stupendous changes in the present social arrangements of mankind.

The bosom of the Christian Church has not been unaffected by these attempts to supersede her in the task of establishing the Kingdom of Heaven among men.

Two classes in the Church are characteristically exercised by these current discussions of faith and socialism. The Conservatives, pure and simple, ecclesiastical Bourbons, who forget nothing old and learn nothing new, may be heard gasping between their sobs of surprise, that such irreverent handling of sacred subjects can lead to nothing but bald infidelity. Over against these, there stands the persistent radical band of sappers and miners, who propose to enter the Celestial City by digging down to the roots of things.

Mrs. Ward's "Robert Elsmere" and Tolstoi's "My Religion" are the spiritual counterparts to the political dreams of Henry George and Edward Bellamy.

Meanwhile, it is more than whispered by detached outsiders, that the present lack of fraternization within the bounds of ecclesiasticism is a forerunner of the speedy abolition of distinctively religious institutions altogether. But if history teaches anything, it is that such seasons of special intellectual activity and moral longing are the precursors of further religious as well as political progress.

The change and advance may not lie along the lines of ecclesiastical fellowship; possibly they may not follow the lead of ecclesiastics at all, either radical or conservative; and yet they will work for Jesus, as the saying is. Indeed, it was not the official Church which did most to ripen the seeds of that truly Christian idea of personal liberty which had lain for centuries as winter wheat, when it flowered into the spiritual power of reformers like Wickliffe and Huss and Luther. It was the springing industrial spirit that thawed away the winter of barbarism. It was commerce and art and education which evoked the new nations, and sent the social world so far forward, five hundred years ago.

An equally important clearing of Christian thought and nerving of Christian effort depend on our recovery of the central doctrine of the Incarnation from its long and dismal eclipse beneath that narrowness of vision which saw nothing in it but an absurd abortion of Nature's ordinary method of operation. It is beginning to be acknowledged that all truth belongs to Christ. Every interest of humanity is bound up with the Son of Man, who is the Son of God. Every discovery which widens the range of knowledge and makes the earth a better place of residence, is in his

service. So Dean Stanley must have thought when he said, "Whatever is good science is good theology; whatever is high morality and pure civilization is high and pure religion." Compare, or rather contrast, such a sentiment as that of the late Dean of Westminster with the narrow dogmatism of logomachists, who seek to contract as much as possible the avenues through which sacred influences can come into human society! This absurd infirmity of denominational conceit we ordinarily pass by with a smile; but when men proceed to pronounce their anathemas on all except those who can speak their peculiar sectarian shibboleth without lisping, it is time to declare that the Divine grace has not made itself over to any denomination or party. "Thou shalt not label thy neighbor's soul" would be an excellent new commandment, which theologians and others would do well to bear in mind.

The idea that any little clique of self-appointed custodians of "the oracles of God," whose members cannot even define their own terms, should pretend to hold so much as a small latch-key to a back door into the real kingdom of Divine use and beauty! The idea that a Church whose doctrinal belief has been gloriously marked by constant changes, and improved by the incorporation into its expanding bosom of the best thought and broadest sympathies of the age, should be content to accept as its spokesmen and leaders those whose faces are turned resolutely away from the sunlight of further revelation, is too preposterous for a moment's serious consideration. It is doubtful if mankind are benefited by such partisanship in morals and religion.

The test of every faith is its power to cast out demons; and Jesus being witness, the prince of demons is Phariseism.

Exclusiveness excludes only itself from the Heavenly Kingdom. He who subordinates his sincere convictions concerning the origin of the Christian system to the supposed necessities of sectarian consistency, will soon subordinate Christianity as a whole to his fragmentary interpretation of it, and will ultimately "end," as Coleridge declares, "in loving himself better than all." Complete Christianity is identical with complete humanity.

We hear much pleading in these days for the "historical Christ;" but the true historical Christ is the Christ of recent history, — the Christ who is painted for us by the experiences of the last few centuries, — who has come to men living and real in their personal and social virtues, in their expanding hopes, aspirations, and endeavors, in their care for the poor and sick, their respect for the unfortunate and enslaved, the nobleness and willingness of their self-sacrifice, the beautiful literary ideals of character which they have cherished, and their daily desire that the Kingdom of God might come on the earth. Many a hymn, sermon, and prayer, and also many a business man's integrity and woman's fidelity have helped to bring into relief some lineament of the Saviour, or to draw a delicate line of that Divine countenance which grows more Divine as the light of larger intelligence falls upon it. This is the Christ who is being incarnated in modern society; and we submit that any social theory which leaves him out of the account is like leaving the sun out of the firma-

ment, the oxygen out of the air, the meaning out of the world. But this conception of the Christ is not yet generally recognized, even among those who have been wont to call themselves Liberals. The salvation of the world still awaits his spiritual coming. How earnestly that coming is waited for, in many quarters, may be judged from the fact that the most popular book of the last decade simply voices the great longing of a sincere soul for a "reconception of the Christ" which shall "bring him afresh into our lives, to make the life so freely given for man minister again in new ways to man's new needs."

And yet Elsmere makes the mistake of supposing that such a "reconception of the Christ" would result in the formation of "a new religion." It would be just the natural and fore-ordained evolution of the oldest and only true religion.

When the apostle Paul speaks of the Church as "the body of Christ," and predicts a time when it shall be filled with "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," we are not to understand it to be the Church as represented by its mere ecclesiastical organization. We are to understand it to be the Church of the whole human race — the great Church of universal humanity. It is a glowing prophecy of an era when, by the slow but certain interfusion of the spirit of Christianity as it mingles with the vital thought and public sentiment of mankind, the world shall be the Church, and the entire life of man an organism of the Holy Ghost. The means to this end are already provided; nay, they are in actual operation all around us, on a scale that makes the frantic

zeal of those who worship only the letter of the Scriptures seem ridiculous.

A few of these means and agencies of incarnation, perhaps seldom thought of in this connection, may be mentioned.

1. One is physical health. Healthy bodies have not always been supposed to be especially conducive to spirituality, but the opposite. This is strange when we consider that Jesus was the product of the Mosaic law, which is one of the most remarkable sanitary systems on record. The ceremonial observances attached to the religion of the Jews were undoubtedly sanative at the outset. The Greeks and Romans also considered it a sacred duty to take charge of anything which was concerned with the health of the people. In Rome the care of the public health was placed with a high officer of state, because Justinian tells us, unclean and impure sewers threaten a pestilential atmosphere and are disastrous to morals. Unfortunately, however, the early Christians thought that the baths and sanitariums of the pagans were a part of their religion, like the instructions of Moses, and therefore they made war against them. Then came the unhappy time when Michelet, the historian of those ages, says very positively, that for a thousand years there was not a man or woman in Europe that ever took a bath. Thirty-three generations of uncleanness are sufficient to account for the terrible epidemics that came in the Middle Ages, — the black death, the sweating sickness, and all the plagues which appeared at that time, and which were followed by mental epidemics still more terrible, such as the dancing mania, the mewing mania, and the biting mania. And even

when the sun of civilization was rising and beginning to throw some light upon those dark ages, what an amount of pathological nonsense there was! The famous plague of London has been often described, but the plagues in other cities and countries were just as bad as those in England.

Unfortunately, filth, instead of being discountenanced, had been sanctified, almost, by religion. The monks, unluckily, followed the recommendations of the early fathers, and pointed with pride to the filthy habits of their order; and so there was imagined to be almost a sanctity about dirt. Saint Jerome especially commends an Egyptian hermit who only combed his hair once a year, — on Easter Sunday, — and never washed his clothes at all, but let them fall in pieces from rotteness. Saint Anthony boasted that he never washed his feet; Saint Thomas à Becket was no better. And so the monks and priests, down to the time of the Reformation, and even later, contended, both by precept and example, that filthiness of the body, by antithesis, indicated purity of the soul. It doubtless did rather tend to help it in their cases, since the odor of sanctity which invested these ancient saints kept them apart from the world and its temptations; for the world was not anxious to come into too close contact with such odoriferous saints.

This association of filth with piety, however, had very serious consequences on theology. Instead of leading men to look to themselves and their own acts and their own habits as the cause of their phenomenal calamities, they went to shrines and trusted to winking virgins. Occult causes were brought in to

explain the situation. For instance, comets, celestial conjunctions, terrestrial exhalations, poisoning of wells by Jews, and a number of unlikely causes were given as the real original of all human afflictions. The consequences of these superstitions may be traced in religious literature for a considerable period ; but during the last century a remarkable change has taken place in the opinions of learned men concerning the reign of law in the natural world, and medical science is now engaged in seeking to remedy the ills of the flesh by studying the substances of food and drink, the limits of work and relaxation, the salubrity of sites and dwellings and clothing. By thus doing, it has succeeded in controlling to a great extent, and even eliminating, many of the worst diseases from the human frame. The paramount importance of health for the adequate discharge of public and private duties has for some time been generally recognized ; its relation to theology is not likely to be much longer delayed. To insure complete incarnation there must be physical ripeness. The spirit cannot make headway against the habitual violation of natural laws, by which so large a part of the human race have failed to be in body what they were created to be.

Perfect obedience to the requirements of physical health will help to make the whole course of Nature work for Christianity.

Heredity must have much to do with this. It is a sin and shame for men and women to go on marrying without a consideration of these things. And they are not likely to do so always. A time is surely predicted when all unhealthiness shall cease ; when the

sunlight, marching round and round the globe, shall not shudder at the sight of a paralytic or a cripple, or one born sick, and physical laws shall be obeyed; and in all the earth, like an athlete without a pain from head to foot, mankind shall be without a sadness or a sigh or a sorrow; and then, and not till then, the Consolation will draw near!

Therefore, we are to welcome all these agencies and instrumentalities which tend to increase the material well-being of mankind. They are Messianic prophets, and true forerunners of the "Christ that is to be."

2. Another agency for advancing this greater incarnation is that inventive genius in man which manifests itself in mechanical ingenuity and means of intercommunication between continents and among the nations. It would be mere commonplace to allude to these things, which are the boast of our age and country, were it not for the fact that they are often stigmatized as being irreligious, and even immoral, in their tendencies and effects. Not a few most excellent people quote Ecclesiastes, where it is said that "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions," as though the "inventions" referred to were railroads and telegraphs and daily newspapers. But in reality all these appliances go forth as God's evangels. Electricity and steam are bringing sundered communities into such a sense of brotherhood as gives a new and nobler meaning to the phrase, "Our Father who art in Heaven."

Railroads and telegraphs are doing more to solve the Mormon problem and the Indian question than all our preachers and statesmen together. Gas and electric lights, by turning the dark alleys of towns and

cities into glittering thoroughfares, have lessened immeasurably the amount of street villany, even if they have not yet abolished municipal jobbery. Movable types and daily newspapers have hunted to the death many forms of iniquity and oppression. Whoever, then, takes the position that, because our sharp detectives are bringing so much barbarism to view, they are, therefore, the cause of that barbarism, makes the same mistake as if he should assert that the light of day creates the ugliness which it reveals.

Improvement is provoked by knowledge, and practical knowledge is more useful than antiquated theories. The classic student delights to gaze into the fires of ancient mythology and recall the olden chivalry of the mysterious age of Orpheus and the enchanted isles of Greece; but this, our modern epic of machinery, breathes a loftier and more heroic romance. It furnishes, indeed, no adventurous Argonauts, feeling their lazy way over a sunny summer sea in search of a Golden Fleece; but it sways to the iron harmonies of emancipation from material bondage, and helps to bind the nations into a vast network of unity, of order, and of law.

When we get words in three minutes from three thousand miles away; when the identical tones and emphasis of living speech are packed into paste and may be preserved for centuries; when the lightning is made to run on errands and report at our breakfast-tables the transactions of the previous day all over the world,—these may be material elements, and very far from the ultimate idea, but they certainly suggest an immense enlargement of the capacity of the human mind to become an appreciative recipient of

universal truth and absolute righteousness. Beside them the questionable "miracles" of antiquity sink into insignificance.

3. But the most significant and promising signs of the coming of the Son of Man are manifested in the tendency of mankind to incarnate in social organizations the several elements of truth, of justice, and of honor. In spite of all that is being said to the contrary, there has never been a time when governments the world over were as helpful and hopeful as they are now. Many of us are about ready to give up our pet belief in a fabulous "golden age" in the past, and to admit that politically, as well as otherwise, the world has made slow but definite progress. If any one holds to a different opinion, he has only to go to Turkey or Russia, and he will there find a preserved and fossilized specimen of what once was universal. Of course, a brief paper like this is not the place to enter upon an extended discussion of political theories and governmental policies; but we can at least indicate our firm conviction that these great departments of human activity are steadily working along the same lines of beneficent advancement which we have seen to be characteristic of every other instinct of our race.

It would doubtless be interesting, if time and space permitted, to investigate the circumstances which, as furnishing the motives and giving direction to achievements already accomplished, have had the principal agency in making us what we are, and to cast a horoscope in the firmament of political possibilities, where some stars are waning and some have set. In this vast field of investigation, that curiosity which every

intelligent mind naturally feels in tracing and comparing different theories of social progress, could hardly fail to be at once dignified and rendered practical by the connection of the inquiry with that

“One far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.”

What else can that “event” be, than the glorious consummation of the process of the Incarnation of the Christ in the human race as a whole, and in every part of it?

Pascal long ago spoke of humanity as one man; and Auguste Comte has carried the idea still further in his conception of mankind as a *Grand-Être*. Neither of these is in any way consistent with the Christian ideal, which predicts an organic union of each and of all with Him who is yet to fill all things with Himself. All things,—all persons, all households, all societies, all commercial and industrial organizations, all laws and governments, all policies under the government, all economies and associations,—all are to be filled with the mind and will and spirit of Christ. As one frail body in old Judæa bore about for a short lifetime the Spirit of God without measure, so this mightier MAN of men is to rejoice in the consciousness of indwelling Deity. And all those processes by which society in its provisional state builds, originates, constructs, invents, and improves itself; by which health and wealth are attained and distributed; by which desirable qualities of mind and heart and character are preserved and handed down,—all these are so many elements and factors of the final consummation.

This conclusion brings us into sympathetic rela-

tionship with everything that has been or is on earth worthy of remembrance, of enunciation, of celebration; all noble natures living or departed, who toil and struggle for righteousness, — however diverse, and even antagonistic their methods may be, — are slowly coming into harmony. It is encouraging thus to know that men who storm and rage against each other here, men who carry venomous weapons, and use them oftener than they ought; men who, misunderstanding each other, crucify their own best friends; disciples who persecute other disciples, and heroes who light the burning pile of heroes, — that these misguided men, mistaken men, men who wade through life with burdensome faults and imperfections, have come and are coming to be fairer men, and are being lifted into that sphere of more perfect vision where, spiritualized, ethereal, ineffable, they stand shoulder to shoulder in the company, not only of one another, but of every living soul that is capable of moral and spiritual affinities.

What a sublime fellowship! What a glorious inheritance of sympathy! Surely our hearts should burn within us while we talk of it. Our eyes should kindle with affection and our hands should clasp in firmest friendship when we contemplate our race as the chosen dwelling-place and city of our God. Human destiny, however, is not like a city of golden streets and crystal battlements, with languor and light and dreams, — not a place of eternal rest by houris fanned, — but in an expectation of eternal advancement; yea, even in the knowledge that there is no fixed home nor stay nor station on the wild, bright way, we know not whither, we shall spurn these

heavens of the dull imagination. From colonnades and temples in gardens terrestrial, where fancy hears the footfalls of the loftiest of time ; past thrones, principalities, and dominions ; past crowns, whose jewels win the lifted eyes of archangels ; up through laws and harmonies which it hath not entered into the heart of man nor angel to conceive, which are to music as is music to the grating of a dungeon hinge, shall spread and penetrate the quickening and beneficial influence of this mighty *Incarnation* ; yet shall it not, through all the ages of eternity, describe the utmost boundaries of the city of our God, nor count the wealth of human nature.

“ For the free spirit of mankind at length
Throws its last fetters off ; and who shall place
A limit to the giant’s unchained strength,
Or curb its swiftness in the forward race !
Far, like the comet’s way through infinite space,
Stretches the long untravelled path of light,
Into the depth of ages ; we may trace,
Distant, the brightening glory of its flight,
Till the receding rays are lost to mortal sight.”

And the Soul of Humanity, redeemed and purified from earthly evil, becomes the fit and only ample abode of Him whose influence filleth all in all.

VIII.

THE OUTER RIM OF NEW TESTAMENT ESCHATOLOGY.

BY PROFESSOR H. P. FORBES, A. M.

IT is proposed to seek from the New Testament an answer to the question suggested by the title of this article. How far into the future extended the onward look of its writers? How distant was the "outer rim" of the horizon which met their gaze as they looked into the time to come? Was it so near that they saw in sharp outline and distinct detail all its figures and their movements, or was it so far that in its dim distance form and color melted off into hazy obscurity?

To prepare oneself to enter into the mental state of the New Testament writers with respect to this conception of time, is no easy task. For modern science, which has so vastly enlarged our conception of cosmic space, has equally magnified our idea of cosmic time. To Ezekiel and Malachi, to Peter and Philo, the world was still young; but a few millenniums had passed since there sounded along over chaos a majestic voice, whose echoes they still seemed to hear, proclaiming, "Let there be light." To us the past has another look. The chronology of Ussher, once authoritative, measures for us but a single stroke of the pendulum of that clock of time whose dial marks only the millenniums. The Adam of his Gene-

sis stands in the foreground of our vision, as we look backward along measureless vistas of geologic æons. The past becomes awe-stirring, mysterious, vast; no minstrel of a few decades ago, singing with glib tongue the deeds and heroes of sixty centuries, but a mighty sphinx, rising from the sands of eternity, whose seams and scars only hint at the awful story her dumb lips can never tell.

Even as clearly has our future become grand and imposing. To the ancients, the world, although so new, was yet an old world, hastening to its dissolution. Itself the centre of the universe, with sun and stars but loosely fixed in the shell-like firmament above, the earth might be shattered as swiftly as it had been formed. We look onward toward and into æons that stretch illimitably before us, awaiting no sudden world-catastrophe or cosmic collapse, but a gradual wasting of the active forces of Nature through vast epochs, until

“ The sun grows cold,
And the stars are old,
And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold.”

The true answer to our question, then, we shall reach only as we abstract ourselves from our own modern conceptions, and by genetic methods seek to understand the ancient thought as it appears in the writings of the New Testament.

By genetic methods, one must repeat; for the New Testament thought can neither be severed from the Old Testament, its matrix, nor from its modifying environment of contemporary belief and literature. To unlettered faith may be gladly left its sweet dream

of a rent heaven, through which to men comes an utterance, unique and supernal, clothed in no mortal diction, related to no human thinking,—a veritable *Verbum Dei*. But the historical student finds the New Testament peculiarly related both in form and contents, to the religious literature which preceded and accompanied it, so that its comprehension is attained only by a precedent study of the writings so closely connected with it.

This is above all true of the eschatology, where a comparative study of Semitic utterances shows that the New Testament thought takes its place as being, for the most part, one of the middle members in a series of developments which begins with the Prophets and ends with the Talmud, the Koran, and the mediæval Christian eschatology.

We must, then, first answer the question, What is the farthest limit of the onward look, the most remote era of which the Prophet spoke? The answer can only be first given in some general, inclusive statement, which will refer more to the substance of the events prophesied than the time of their fulfilment.

In the Old Testament the prophetic prediction pertains to the time of redemption, or the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and does not extend beyond the time of such establishment.

The phrase “times or coming of Messiah” might be used, but would be inadequate, since in the prophetic vision of Joel, Amos, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Deutero-Isaiah, and Haggai, there is included no mention of Messiah.

The event toward which the Prophet’s vision looked, and of which his tongue spoke, was the establishment

of the Kingdom of Jehovah, the day when Israel should fulfil its divine destiny as the people of God. Sinful now, but still a chosen people, punished now by foreign powers, but only that she may be purified, the day will dawn when her throne of empire shall be raised on the ruins of all nations that opposed her; and guided by a series of splendid rulers of David's line, she shall realize for herself and for the nations of the world the destiny so long foretold. With this purification of Israel, its restoration, and the admission of other nations to share the glories of its new day, the onward look of its Prophets ended. They give us no history of its years or ages, nor do they look onward to a time when, like all earthly realities, the Kingdom, too, shall end, or exchange its earthly forms for celestial.

It was theirs to see and announce the dawning. And who shall say that this was not enough, or decry its value? Unique in substance as in quality, without a parallel in other Sacred Writ, is this onward look of Israelitish prophecy into a coming golden age; and the fervor, constancy, and success with which the Prophets applied it to Israel's need, to exalt her debased standards, rebuke her transgressions, keep her heart from breaking amid the most awful miseries and put into her mouth a new song when her calamity was overpast, are surely proof enough to the devout and candid mind that a Divine spirit dwelt in the Prophet's heart, and made his vision a Word of God,—the coming of God's Kingdom! And if they drew with errant pencil its outline, or painted betimes its glories in tints copied from Judæan hills, it is well to remember that God dwells not alone in the unerring

and the perfect, and that that which is the varied product of historical development may be as well ripened fruit from the tree of Life Eternal.

But it still remains to answer more precisely the question concerning the exact time when were to take place the events which so filled the horizon of the Prophet's future. This answer, which throws a flood of light on the New Testament expectation of the Parousia, is, indeed, at first reception, a startling one. Itself an inevitable result of that scientific method in exegesis which aims only at reproducing the Prophet's thought without modern admixture, this answer has been almost entirely concealed by a false theory of prophecy, inherited from Rabbinic Judaism. This theory originated in the evident and important facts that the Prophets announced a coming Kingdom of God, and a Messiah or Messianic line; and that the relation between the Old Testament and the New is the organic one of bud to blossom, or youth to manhood. But it took shape at last in the proposition that the Old Testament writers, historian, psalmist, Prophet, described in advance the era of Jesus of Nazareth, his birth, the places, circumstances, and incidents of his life, the tragedy of his death, the triumph of his resurrection. Already in the pages of the New Testament we see the tentative beginnings of that torture of the Old, which is the consequence of this tremendous fallacy; and its results may be seen in Christian literature from the pages of Justin the Martyr, to the prefixed chapter analyses in the most modern editions of the Holy Scriptures. Hereby the true idea of prophecy suffered an almost total eclipse. For the predictive element is subordinate in

Old Testament prophecy, and is no definite pre-announcement of specific details, but a free and ideal delineation of God's Kingdom, according to the Prophet's view of the connection between his own time with its active forces and the establishment of that Kingdom.

The very moment we put aside the theory that because the Prophets announced Messiah and the Kingdom, they must have looked, with substantial accord, straight onward into the times of Augustus and Tiberius Cæsar, of Pilate and Annas, and ask without prejudice the question: *When* did each Prophet expect Messiah or the coming salvation? we find an answer by no means difficult of access, but at once startling and instructive.

Each Old Testament Prophet regards the latter days as at hand or near, and represents the times of salvation, Messiah, and the Kingdom, as closely connected with, and the immediate outgrowths of, the great historical movements of his own era.

The entire evidence cannot be here submitted, but enough may be reasonably demanded to prove the truth of the proposition. To Micah, in the midst of the Assyrian invasions, the Messianic times are not far away. Zion and Jerusalem are, indeed, to be destroyed,¹ but only for a brief time shall their desolations endure. For out of the Davidic line,² Messiah shall rise up in the majesty of Jehovah's name; and when the Assyrian hosts invade again the beloved land, "this man shall be our peace,"³ his victorious generals shall lay waste the hated

¹ Micah iii. 12.

² Micah v. 2.

³ Micah v. 5.

Assyrian dominions,¹ Israel be as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and the temple, re-established on Zion, become sacred to the nations as well as to Israel.²

Isaiah, a contemporary of Micah, sees the events of his own times as the immediate precursors of the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom. Again and again he describes the deliverance of Judah from the Assyrian power as the initial movement in a series of gracious acts by which Jehovah will establish his Kingdom.³ A most conspicuous instance is found in that section which begins with the fifth verse of the tenth chapter, and extends to the thirteenth chapter. Assyria is but the instrument of Jehovah's anger; it shall be but "a very little while" before a shoot shall come forth from the fallen trunk of Jesse, a Messiah, wise, just in judgment, mighty.⁴ He shall overthrow Assyria, Philistia, Edom, Moab, and call back the exiles from Assyria and Egypt.⁵

In Deutero-Isaiah, too, if one may so designate the prophetic voices that speak to us out of the era of the Babylonish captivity, the same phenomenon is manifest. In unmistakable terms the events of the immediate future, such as the capture of Babylon by Cyrus,⁶ the return to Jerusalem,⁷ the rebuilding of the temple,⁸ are described as the initial acts, or even as the leading features, of that grand movement which is to culminate in the glory of a righteous nation, the teacher of the Gentiles, itself dwelling in a holy city, nevermore

¹ Micah v. 5-7.

² Micah iv. 1-5.

³ Isaiah xix. 23-25; xxvii. 13; xxx. 19-33; xxxi. 7-9.

⁴ Isaiah xi. 1-5.

⁵ Isaiah xi. 11-18.

⁶ Isaiah xlvii.

⁷ Isaiah xlviii. 20, 21; xlix. 13-26.

⁸ Isaiah lx., lxi., lxii.

to be named Forsaken. Even the Persian Cyrus is called Messiah, and his conversion to the knowledge of Jehovah is one of the features of the latter days.¹

To Haggai and Zechariah, in the years of their return, the goal toward which the feet of prophecy run, is near. It is but "a little while" before Jehovah will shake the nations, and the desirable things of all nations shall come to increase the latter-day glory of the new temple, which even Zerubbabel the leader of the returning exiles shall live to see,² and he whose name is the "Branch," even he is to build.³

Further illustration from Hosea, Joel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel might be given, but is surely needless. None would probably be more willing than the Prophets themselves, to acknowledge that they knew not "the day or the hour;" and those who demand of the Prophet specific detail of time and circumstance concerning a distant future, should remember that even the most reverent thinking may question whether, amid the interaction of those great forces which determine human history, and are surely in part dependent on the free action of men, even Deity itself were able to specify in advance the minutiae of those movements which change the destinies of nations.

The same characteristics appear as we approach and enter the times of the New Testament. Prophecy ceased, but Apocalypse offered a fresher and more conventional, if a less exalted, vision of the future.

The book of Daniel, in its present form a product of the Maccabæan era — written, as its contents show, to

¹ Isaiah xlv. 1-3.

² Haggai ii. 6, 8, 21-23.

³ Zechariah vi. 12, 13.

enhearten the patriots with the prospect of a speedy triumph — delineates no earthly kingdom after the Seleucidæan, but passes immediately from a detailed description of Antiochus Epiphanes, the present ruler,¹ to the times of the end, when Michael, the leader of the armies of heaven, shall deliver the chosen people; and with the victory comes a resurrection.² And as the seer asks, When shall be the end of those wonders? the answer closely connects it with the placing of the image of Zeus on the golden altar in the temple.³

To the author of 2 Esdras iv., the world already waxes old. Of the twelve æons during which it is to endure, ten and one half are already gone.⁴ The pseudepigraph literature of the time furnishes valuable evidence of the popular opinions. On this point Enoch, the Sibylline Oracles, the Psalms of Solomon, the Apocalypse of Baruch, and other similar writings, uniformly agree that of the world-æons, or periods, all or nearly all have passed, the last draws near or has already begun. The eschatological delineation contains more and more of the supernatural. The prophetic description presented largely that which was within the limits of the natural. The Messianic time was the ideal or perfection of earthly conditions and relations.

Destroyed as a political force, scattered as a people from Persia to the pillars of Hercules, with a stinging sense of their own impotence over against the mighty nations amidst which they trafficked, the Jews came to see the world in a new aspect; and if they still clung to the old hope, discerned that it could not be real-

¹ Daniel xi. 21-45.

² Daniel xii. 1, 2.

³ Daniel xii. 11-13.

⁴ 4 Esdras xiv. 10, 11.

ized under the conditions furnished by the letter or prophecy.

A new breadth of view characterizes the apocalyptic thought. The national Jehovah has become the God of this vast world. The Judgment, no longer confined to Israel and contiguous nations, has become a world-assize; while, with a sense of the value of the individual unknown to the Prophets, there had arisen the belief that in its awful solemnities and decrees the dead would be raised to share. He who could subdue these vast empires and found a kingdom which should embrace and rule them was surely no human Messiah, and his armies no scanty legions of Judæan warriors.

The more intense the contrast between Israel's promised glory and its present impotence and abasement, the deeper grew the conviction that deliverance must come from above, the blessed future be the *antithesis* rather than the *outgrowth* of existing conditions; and in the hour of Israel's greatest woe, weakness, and peril, by heavenly powers and leaders, Messiah's kingdom be established.

Side by side, therefore, yet often in admixture, we find the two species of Messianic expectation, one confined mainly within the limits of the natural, the other, cosmic, supernal, catastrophic.

We come now to obtain from the New Testament itself its answer to the questions, When are to occur those events which comprise the "last things"? How far into the future does the thought of its writers extend?

The most obvious result of even a cursory comparison of the New Testament with the Old, and with con-

temporary Jewish literature, is the sense of its striking similarity with both in the one element of eschatology. In the one, its subject matter is the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, or of God, in the times of Messiah, which are conceived as near; in the other, we have the division of historical time into two eras,—the present age, *Olam Hazze*; and the age to come, *Olam Hubba*,—the conception that the close of this age is to be marked by the phenomena of apostasies, earthly calamities, celestial commotions, a Messiah from Heaven, resurrection, judgment.

So thoroughly has the prevalent habit of thought its representation in the New Testament, that we find, for example, in the Apocalypse, the days of the Messiah with their phenomena of resurrection, judgment, Gog and Magog, regarded as constituting the imposing phenomena with which the present age passes into the age to come, in which respect it is in close accord with the earlier Targumim and Midraschim.

How speedily the Jews who were not Christians expected the transfer from the old æon into the new Messianic one, we may learn from a single historical incident more forcibly even than from the pages of their Apocalypses. On the fatal August day in 70 A. D., when the Roman soldier flung his burning torch into a court of the temple, the fire which followed consumed thousands of Jews in that very court, who had gathered there, awaiting in those very hours, now that the cup of their misery had been drunk to its last dregs, the appearance of Messiah from Heaven.

But it is among the early Christians as seen in the pages of the New Testament, that this expectancy of near fulfilment reaches its utmost intensity. The

hope and expectation of the Church were fixed upon a series of events soon to take place, some of which, indeed, had already occurred. The time of these events they called, in conformity with the usual terminology "the consummation of the age,"¹ that is, the completion of the pre-Messianic age; sometimes "the end,"² "the day,"³ "that day,"⁴ the "last day,"⁵ the "day of Judgment,"⁶ the "day of Christ" or of "Jesus," or of the "Lord Jesus."⁷ In these last expressions we find the especial and sufficient cause of the peculiar limitations, both as to form and time, which mark the eschatology of the New Testament. For while the absence of any special indication of the near fulfilment of prophecy left the Jew free to exercise his fancy or insight in fixing the time and feature of the Messianic appearance and Kingdom; the Christian had no such option. To him the "last times" were surely here. Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, and in his appearance was given the actual demonstration that the whole prophetic and traditional expectation was soon to become reality.

Soon to become reality; the statement must receive emphasis. For we cannot understand the pages of the New Testament without a clear apprehension of a peculiar duad of conceptions, which was the inevitable result of the situation of the early church. Mes-

¹ Matthew xlii. 39, 40, 49; xxiv. 3; xxviii. 20.

² Matthew xxiv. 14; 1 Corinthians i. 8; x. 11; 1 Peter iv. 7, *et seq.*

³ Luke xvii. 24; Acts xvii. 31; 1 Corinthians iii. 13, *et seq.*

⁴ Matthew vii. 22; Luke x. 12.

⁵ John vi. 39, 40; xi. 24; xii. 48.

⁶ Matthew x. 15; xii. 36; 2 Peter ii. 9; iii. 7, *et seq.*

⁷ 1 Corinthians i. 8; v. 5; 2 Corinthians i. 4; Philippians i. 6, 10; ii. 16; 1 Thessalonians v. 2; 2 Thessalonians ii. 2; 2 Peter iii. 10.

siah had come, yet the "age to come" was not established. He had come but to disappear amid mystery that seemed defeat, and the disciples must confront the forces of a hostile world, instead of seeing the expected¹ marvels of transformation and triumph. Messiah had come, and with him truth and saving power; but even Peter, amidst the happy days that followed Pentecost, looks forward with eager eyes to the "times of refreshing"¹ that shall come with Jesus from Heaven, and the last of the New Testament voices dies away in a sad wail over the woes of an age in which "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."² As an essence, the Kingdom of God was already founded in the person of Jesus; in the forces operative through him in believers and the community, that Kingdom was indeed "in their midst."³ The peculiar life it was to produce had already become the possession of disciples. This could not fail to be perceived by the more spiritual, and in the Pauline writings it receives its partial, as in the Johannean literature, its almost perfect expression. The life, the truth, the death, of Jesus have brought salvation. Parousia, resurrection, judgment, are experiences of the soul.

From the standpoint of New Testament soteriology, which is Christian, the Kingdom of God is already established. Yet intermingling with these ideas, and forming the other element of the duad, we find a different series of conceptions. From the standpoint of New Testament eschatology, which is mainly traditional, the Kingdom of God is still future.

¹ Acts iii. 19.² 2 Peter iii. 4.³ Luke xvii. 21.

Not at once on his resurrection will Jesus restore the Kingdom; his disciples must first bear witness of him to the ends of the earth.¹ Before all who are then living shall taste of death, he shall come in his kingdom.² Only when wars, calamities unspeakable, terrific celestial phenomena, ravage and distract the world, shall it be known that the Kingdom of God is nigh.³ Thus salvation is often spoken of as future, a hope, a stored treasure ready to be revealed; the Kingdom of God is generally presented in the epistolary writings as a coming, not a present reality. Almost every book of the New Testament bears witness to the fact that the early church thought itself living midst the stormy times which mark the closing days of *Olam Hazze*, and gazing already, with eyes of wonder at the signs of the speedy dawning of the blessed "age to come."

To no age, to no mind in any age, is vouchsafed a perfect insight into the moral and spiritual forces operative within it, and it need awaken no surprise if we find the immediate disciples of Jesus expecting the new age to come rather through a series of marvellous interpositions and transformations wrought by Jehovah than through the silent and hidden processes by which truth, faith, and love all too slowly transmute the world. Such, at least, was the fact. The earthly life and achievement of the Messiah, which was the centre of Old Testament thought concerning the "last things," was taken from the domain of eschatology. The consummation of the age, the establishment of the "new heavens and the new earth," belonged still to the

¹ Acts i. 6.

² Matthew xvi. 28.

³ Luke xxi. 31.

future, and had, as its central point, the *second* coming of Messiah, his triumphant return from heaven. Then comes the regeneration.¹ Then salvation is revealed.² Then trial, distress, and persecution, will end.³ Then comes the Kingdom, with Messiah upon the throne, rewarding and punishing.⁴

But when was this to be? Almost every book of the New Testament gives answer in clearest terms. It is surely unnecessary to present in detail the evidence which *compels* a candid exegesis to the conclusion that the New Testament writers regarded the Parousia as an event of the near future. In the earliest epistle Paul can express the change which came to his Greek converts from heathenism, in no more significant terms than that they "had turned unto God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven,"⁵ and among the living in that day, he counts himself.⁶ The little Aramaic phrase, *Maran Atha*,⁷ in the letter to the Greeks at Corinth, shows how familiar Paul must have made his Gentile churches with the thought of the Parousia. James,⁸ John,⁹ Jude,¹⁰ echo his words. In the Apocalypse, again and again, the voice of the Lord Jesus rings out like a trumpet, "Behold I come quickly."¹¹ In the Gospels the same teaching recurs

¹ Matthew xix. 28.

² 1 Peter i. 5, 13.

³ 1 Corinthians i. 8; 1 Thessalonians v. 23; 1 Timothy vi. 14.

⁴ Matthew xiii. 41, 49; xvi. 28; xxv. 31, ff.; Luke ix. 26, 27; 2 Timothy iv. 1, 8.

⁵ 1 Thessalonians i. 9, 10.

⁶ 1 Thessalonians iv. 17.

⁷ 1 Corinthians xvi. 22.

⁸ James v. 8.

⁹ 1 John ii. 18.

¹⁰ Jude 18.

¹¹ Revelations iii. 11, 22; vii. 12, 20.

with frequency.¹ In the latest book of the collection, out of the midst of the second century when "the fathers had fallen asleep" and the decades still ran their weary round of woe and sin, we hear voices crying out in the mocking accents of a lapsed faith, "Where is the promise of his coming?" to be met with the answer that God, who counteth not time as man reckoneth, has lengthened the years in mercy, yet there is no need to despair because the signs shine not in heaven, the day will come as stealthily as comes the thief.² This second coming of Christ, heralded as in Apocalyptic and Talmudic thought by evil days, the "travail pains of Messiah," and signs in earth and sky,³ is more definitely fixed by being connected with the calamity to come upon Jerusalem, in that, while in Matthew the Parousia follows *immediately*, in Mark it comes an indefinite time after, while Luke inserts between the two events an important interval, "the times of the Gentiles."⁴

But it is of the utmost importance to note the further fact that *with the Parousia is connected the whole series of events which formed the substance of eschatological thought*. Sometimes one step of the process is brought into prominence, sometimes another; rarely have we any united mention of all, but from the whole mass of statements it is possible to present a somewhat complete picture of the events which accompany the Parousia, and constitute the end of the age that

¹ Matthew x. 23; xvi. 27, 28; xxiv. 34; xxvi. 29, 64, and parallels; John xiv. 8, 18; xvi. 17, 22; xxi. 22, 28.

² 2 Peter iii. 1-12.

³ Matthew xxiv. 8, 12, 21, 29; 2 Timothy iii. 1, etc.

⁴ Matthew xxiv. 28; Mark xiii. 24; Luke xxi. 24.

is, while they are also sometimes conceived as the opening events of the age to come.

Of these events the one most immediately connected with the Parousia, is the resurrection. With one exception soon to be mentioned, the New Testament writers know of but one resurrection, and *connect that with the return of Messiah from heaven*. Most convincing are some of the passages where the connection is incidental, so that the involuntary association of ideas reveals the prevailing habit of thought. In solemn passages of warning of the judgment that is to pass even upon believers, we see the shadowy forms of the dead standing along with the living before the tribunal of Christ.¹ Thus, even in John, it is the voice of the returning Son of Man that calls the dead to their award of life or condemnation.² In the Apocalypse the martyrs rise at the coming of the Logos.³ In didactic portions of the Pauline writings the connection is clear and emphatic. At the Parousia the believers will rise.⁴ When the Lord Jesus descends from heaven with a word of command and the trump of God, even before the living are changed, the dead will be raised.⁵

More noticeable still, as more numerous, are the passages which connect the Parousia with the judgment. They follow the Old Testament idea, that *the beginning of Messiah's reign* would be marked by solemn acts of judgment. The New Testament throbs with this expectation. Amid the glories of Messiah's

¹ 1 Peter iv. 5; 2 Timothy iv. 1; Acts x. 42; Philipians iii. 20, 21.

² John v. 29.

³ Revelations xx. 4, 5.

⁴ 1 Corinthians xv. 28.

⁵ 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-17; 1 Corinthians xv. 52.

coming, as he descends from heaven, we hear the trump that wakes the dead and summons them before the throne of judgment.¹ The celerity with which Paul glides from a consideration of the heavenly condition, to the thought that all believers, living or dead, must stand before the judgment seat of Christ,² affords us a deep glance into his ways of thinking. His announcements of coming *world-wide* judgments, made to a Roman Felix,³ made to cultured Greeks at Athens,⁴ made to Gentiles in far-off Rome,⁵ can only by an exegesis lashed to the chariot of dogma be minimized into the calamities that swept the petty province of Judæa, and levelled Jerusalem with the dust.

The synoptics abound in expressions of the same idea. The parables of the tares,⁶ the drag net,⁷ the pounds,⁸ especially of the virgins, the entrusted talents and the sheep and goats,⁹ all enforce the solemn lesson that at "the end of the age," with the return of Messiah, judgments will issue. Before the august judgment seat we see an assemblage from all the nations,¹⁰ among whom we discern the men of Nineveh in the far east, and the Queen of Ethiopia in the uttermost parts of the south, as well as the people of ancient Tyre and Sidon,¹¹ and every one receiveth sentence according to his words and works.

¹ Luke xiv. 14; 2 Timothy i. 18; iv. 1, 8; 1 Corinthians i. 7, 8; 2 Corinthians iv. 14; James v. 8, 9; 1 Peter v. 4.

² 2 Corinthians v. 9, 10.

³ Acts xxiv. 25.

⁴ Acts xviii. 31.

⁵ Romans ii. 16; xiv. 10.

⁶ Matthew xiii. 37-44.

⁷ Matthew xiii. 47-50.

⁸ Luke xix. 11-27.

⁹ Matthew xxv. 1-46.

¹⁰ Matthew xii. 36; xvi. 27; xxv. 32.

¹¹ Matthew xii. 41, 42; Luke x. 13.

Closely joined also with the Parousia and resurrection is the idea of a transformation of the world. This is most apparent in the passages where the change to come upon the living is brought into notice. At once,¹ on the resurrection of the dead, the bodies of the living will be transformed into more pneumatic organs, conformed to the glorious body of the risen Messiah.² A change comes over the cosmos. Marriage, possessions, pleasures, avail not.³ Nature itself, in pains as of travail because of man's sin, awaiteth the deliverance that is to come, when, at the Parousia, the believers receive the redemption of the body.⁴ Then is the "restoration of all things,"⁵ when the old heavens and earth are transmuted, perhaps through fire,⁶ which is shown to be a real elemental force by its comparison with the Noachian flood, and a new heaven and earth are established.⁷

With this feature of a renewed heaven and earth, the *general eschatological thought closes*. All,—*Parousia, resurrection, transformation*,—*belong to the close of the age or the beginning of the future Messianic time*. New Testament prophecy has the same goal as that of the Old Testament,—*the establishment of the Kingdom of God through Messiah*.

These things constitute, in the New Testament *as a whole*, the *outer rim*, the extreme limit of its eschatology. There are, indeed, many passages which

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 52.

² Philippians iii. 20, 21; 1 Thessalonians iv. 17; 1 Corinthians xv. 52; 2 Corinthians v. 4.

³ 1 Corinthians vii. 29-31; Luke xiv. 34, 35.

⁴ Romans viii. 18-23.

⁵ Acts iii. 21.

⁶ 2 Peter iii. 7, 10, 12.

⁷ 2 Peter iii. 13; Revelation xxi. 1.

speak of a final triumph of Christ over and in all men; there are many where the reward and punishment administered at the Parousia are spoken of as "æonian." But the former class of passages contain no time limit; and as to the latter, the word "æon" and its adjective are so clearly in a process of transition to the specific Christian sense of "the Messianic age" and that which pertains to it, that they take on a *qualitative* rather than a *chronological* signification. Both classes of passages, therefore, have no significance in an investigation of the When rather than the What of New Testament eschatology, and cannot negative the general conclusion, that the passing of the old age into the new, the Parousia and its accompaniments, forms the "outer rim" of the onward look.

To this there are in the New Testament, however, two sharply defined exceptions. The Apocalypse, — that weird product of Rabbinic Judaism, wrought over by a Christian hand, but left unchanged in its essential elements, — delineates the woes of the last times, the fall of Jerusalem and Rome, the overthrow of Beliar, the Parousia with its resurrection and judgment.¹ This is the usual, but in what follows we find the type of thought which, in the Apocalypse of Baruch and Fourth Ezra, as in the Talmud, regards the years of Messiah's reign as a brief æon preparatory to a more blessed age. Swiftly run the mystic thousand years of Messiah's reign, followed by loosing of Satan, conflicts with forces from Gog and Magog, the overthrow by supernal fire. Then from the deep

¹ Revelation xx. 4, 5.

caverns of the wide sea, and deeper depths of Hades, rise the dead, who, small and great, stand before the white throne where shines the Presence before whom earth and heaven flee away. Then the old heavens and earth give place to new, upon the purified world descends the new Jerusalem, the abode of the blessed, outside of whose jasper walls and gates of pearl we see the multitudes of idolaters and unclean. And with this dualism the vision ends.

The other instance is to be found in the Pauline writings. These precious relics of the greatest of the Apostles bear testimony alike to his Rabbinic training and the increasing extent to which Christian principles modified his traditional eschatology. That feature of his teaching has already been brought into prominence. But the onward look of Paul does not stop here. His thought, if we may believe the Ephesian epistle to be from his pen, sweeps on to whole "æons to come,"¹ in which the fulfilment of the "purpose of the ages,"² shall be carried out. The bold faith with which, in the fifth chapter of Romans, he presents the salvation coming through Christ as even more than an equivalent for the ruin wrought through Adam, and in its eleventh chapter describes the rejection of the Jews as the temporary means by which, in the wisdom of God, both the "fulness of the Gentiles" and "all Israel" are to be brought to salvation, prepares us to expect an onlook beyond that near Parousia which must surely issue in "æonian destruction" as well as in æonian reward. This we do find in a remarkable passage in the discussion of

¹ Ephesians ii. 7.

² Ephesians iii. 11.

the resurrection.¹ First in order comes the resurrection of Christ, then of those who are his at his Parousia, when he enters upon his kingly career and must reign till he has subdued all opposing forces. "Then comes the end," when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God the Father who becomes "all in all." Here we have distinct implication of a salvatory process, becoming more effective instead of ceasing at the Parousia, since it cannot be that this time of entering upon his reign is the very moment of Messiah's abdication; and the Apostle looks on toward an end of the most sublime cosmic unity, a far horizon where all lesser forms, even that of Messiah, grow dim, and God becomes "all in all."

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 22-23.

IX.

JESUS AND HUMAN NATURE.

BY RICHMOND FISK, D.D.

“IF I know anything I know what human nature needs, what the people crave for. It is the Saviour whose goings forth have been of old even from everlasting, and who in the fulness of time came down to this earth, and labored and suffered and died as we have to die; but who also rose again and lives and reigns and loves his people as much as when he wept over the grave of Lazarus.”¹

“Him who made of one blood all nations and who ransomed that blood by the payment of the last drop of his own.”²

And this language is possible in the closing years of the nineteenth century after Christ!

We are assured a thousand times over, that any theory of legends and myths, and of a predisposition of mind to regard unusual personages and events from a supernatural point of view, in the age of Jesus and the Apostles, can have no place in a valid examination and interpretation of the literature and phenomena of the early Church. We are even asked to believe that the age was a remarkable one for cool-headedness and freedom from the disposition to take for granted the special interference of God in the

¹ Dr. McCosh on Robert Elsmere, the “New York Ledger,” January 5, 1889.

² Dr. Talmage, recent sermon, “No Know-Nothingism.”

ways of Nature and the affairs of man. And yet at the present moment, with all the settled conviction even of Christians, that miracles and supernatural acts of God no longer take place, we behold a state of mind in philosophers, preachers, and people illustrated in the language quoted above, that makes it still possible for them to believe and affirm ideas of God and man, which the wildest mythology of antiquity may be challenged to equal in monstrous absurdity and flight of superstition. If the present time can seriously exalt one who was once a man to the proportions of the Infinite, and bring down the Infinite to the experience of suffering, weeping, and shedding his blood, and rising from the dead, — who shall presume to mock the truth of history by denying that eighteen centuries ago a kindred state of mind was prevalent in such large degree as to make not only probable, but inevitable, the rise and growth of traditions and legends and marvels, which have been the despair of commentators, philosophers, historians, apologists, and critics, in their efforts to make clear and rational and authoritative the real word of God in the manhood of Jesus of Nazareth?

“The disposition to regard all strange phenomena as manifestations of supernatural power was universally prevalent in the first century of Christianity and long after. Neither greatness of intellect nor thoroughness of scepticism gave exemption. Even Julius Cæsar was somewhat superstitious despite his atheism and his vigorous common sense. It is too often argued that the prevalence of scepticism in the Roman Empire must have made one scrupulous about accepting miracles. By no means. Nothing but physical science ever drives out

miracles; mere doctrinal scepticism is powerless to do it. In the age of the Apostles, little, if any, radical distinction was drawn between a miracle and an ordinary occurrence. No one supposed a miracle to be an infraction of the laws of nature, for no one had a clear idea that there were such things as laws of nature. A miracle was simply an extraordinary act, exhibiting the power of the person who performed it." ¹

It is useless to cry out against discussing the nature of Jesus. Whether he was man, or God, or both, or one of three expressed qualities or manifestations of God, or one of three persons in unity, or a pre-existent being of highest rank under God, or was just man by nature, are questions that will not yet be put to rest.

The writer's contention is that Jesus was none other than a man, with human parentage like all of us; that all he claimed and did and was subjected to, or which the New Testament writers substantially claim for him, is set forth under the assumption of his human nature; that Gethsemane, Calvary, and the Resurrection have their profoundest significance for man in the fact of Jesus himself being a man; that the assumption that he was either both man and God, or a pre-existent hierarch, made man through human birth, makes confusion worse confounded in all expositions and practical applications of the Gospel and of history at large, and robs the human race at once of its brightest member and of the reality of the Divine Immanence with its immeasurable significance.

¹ John Fiske, *The Unseen World*, p. 134.

That a larger spirit and life, a mightier ethical and spiritual force, even a new order of humanity, began with Jesus, we affirm in common with all Christians. That the results of Jesus in history constrain to belief in his being more and other than man, is a proposition we deny. It is defended on an inferior and inadequate estimate of human nature and of the presence of God in history, while insufficient credit is given to the development of science and invention, and to the time element in civilization. The fact that this development has so largely occurred within Christendom is claimed as due to Christ and Christian progress. There is truth in this claim, but there is as much truth in the statement that Christian progress is due to science and invention and commerce, without which the crude cosmogony of the Bible, and of the Church for over eighteen centuries, and the narrow interpretations by theologians of nature, man, and God, could not have been overthrown, and a highway have been made for the coming of God in larger revelations of the universe and of mankind.

In nothing that Jesus said, did, or claimed, does he differ from other great characters in history, save in degree.

No careful reading of the Gospels, as they stand, can fail to show that there were in Jesus' experience and development "Struggles with himself, gradual steps by which he came to the conviction that he was meant, in God's providence, to be the King of the world and the man of men."¹

¹ J. F. Clarke, *Common Sense in Religion*, p. 314.

This fact, with the artless observation that he "increased in knowledge and wisdom and in favor with God and man,"¹ is explicable on no rational theory save that of his limited human nature.

In holding this view we affirm with no less emphasis the need and the office of Jesus' sublime personality as the effective and established centre of organic movements and inspiration in true spiritual progress. It doubtless does mean a decrease of emphasis on externals of religion, but with corresponding elevation to first place of true faith and character. But in dismissing the deified and superhuman Jesus, we find a Jesus whose person and character and influence fall into normal relations with God's vast ways of leading and educating man. Who of all the confident prophets of the day has the data to justify the predictions we so often hear, that Jesus and the Bible interpreted by the natural laws of history and the spiritual endowment of human nature will prove valueless in the moral quickening and leadership of the world?

Are not the signs abundant that Jesus can hold his rank as the most exalted character in history only as supernaturalism is either extended to all history, or denied to all history? Is not Socrates on the plane of nature contrasted with Jesus supernaturally "guarded, guided, and helped," manifestly the man of greatest moral worthiness? Who could not be a Christ if he were God, or a supernatural being, or a man so immediately and specially and without measure aided of God as to attain sinlessness?

¹ Luke iii. 52.

If the sage of Greece and the carpenter of Nazareth are under the same laws of history within the supernatural Providence of God, then Jesus in rank of character and mission as Son of Man, or Son of God, leaves Socrates in comparative shadow, though by no means extinguished as a true light of God in history. If both are on the same non-supernatural plane of human life, Jesus equally rises in vast proportions of character and service to man above the Greek.

We hold that out of the man Jesus, filled with a confidence in and a consciousness of God beyond any other master, sprang the world-uniting movement of love, which, either God-ward or man-ward, determines the grand distinction of Christianity. But is not this difference so radical and superior, we are asked, as to establish the claim that Jesus was more than a man? Why, we reply, think him more than human because of this and all it naturally implies? That in him came first into human thought and life a spirit and love so ample as to embrace literally the world, is no more evidence of a superhuman moral nature than the discovery by Newton, which gave us the world-uniting thought and working principle of gravitation, is evidence of this philosopher's possession of a supernatural intellect.

State as strongly as the case can be made the differences and superiority of Jesus, Christianity, and Christendom, compared with other masters, religions, and civilizations, and you will have no stronger proof of the superhuman nature of Jesus than we have of the superhuman intellect of Copernicus and his successors, who have disclosed nature, history, and the God of the universe in a degree more striking and

superior, if possible, contrasted with previous conceptions of nature and mankind, than is that of Christianity regarded strictly as a religion contrasted with Judaism and other religions. Not a written creed in Christendom can justify its statements and implications before the court of modern knowledge.

“ This century, which some have called an age of iron, has been also an age of ideas, — an era of seeking and finding, the like of which was never known before. It is an epoch, the grandeur of which dwarfs all others that can be named since the beginning of the historic period, if not since man first became distinctively human. In their mental habits, in their methods of inquiry, and in the data at their command, the men of the present day who have fully kept pace with the scientific movement are separated from the men whose education ended in 1830, by an immeasurably wider gulf than has ever before divided one progressive generation of men from their predecessors. The intellectual development of the human race has been suddenly, almost abruptly, raised to a higher plane than that upon which it had proceeded from the days of the primitive troglodyte to the days of our great-grandfathers.”¹

The putting of Jesus and Christianity by themselves, as the products of a supernatural nature in Jesus, while all the rest of the thought, faith, hope, and character of mankind is set down to the natural, is a violent assumption no more to be justified than a like attempt would be in behalf of modern science as against the science of antiquity. As any least observation and use of nature in early ages was so

¹ Fiske, *The Idea of God*, p. 56.

far scientific and true to the truth of things, and thus one with modern knowledge, so any thought, act of reverence, faith, hope, love, obedience, vision, or intuition of obligation, of worthiness, of moral law and life, in any age, were in line with the highest and latest attainments of Christian character. We do not believe that any comparison of the inspiration, revelation, teachings, and historical results of Jesus with those of other men and ages, will ever establish his superiority as being other than one of degree. To find it otherwise seems to us not only improbable, but impossible, since the very assumption is a contradiction of the facts of history,—as irrational as to assume that geometry can be severed from arithmetic. Jesus' fulness no more makes him other than a man than the vastness of the ocean makes its waters other than that of rivers, rills, and the dew-drop. The larger results of his life put him outside of human nature no more than the commerce of the sea is severed from that of the lakes and rivers.

But if you grant the miracles, do they not make Jesus superhuman? No. Precisely what is claimed in the story of Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit? A miraculous birth is often spoken of. This is a mistake. Jesus' birth was natural, his pre-natal development in time and manner was natural. There is no claim of miracle here. What the miracle did, and all it is claimed by the story to have done, was to secure conception. For Mary the result was no different than it would have been had Joseph been the father of her child. And at birth the child was not a god, nor an angel, but a man-child, born to be reared like all other children.

Thus this miracle, though proved beyond doubt, no more makes Jesus other than a human being, than the wine at Cana was the ambrosia of gods because the water was supplied with the alcohol and other ingredients necessary to make wine. The fact seems clear that the miracle was not conceived on a scale large enough to meet all the requirements of the Latin theology in its evolution. It simply meets the thought of some in the age in which it arose,—that so remarkable a man must have had a somewhat unusual origin. Some at the time had a different story, found in the Gospel to the Hebrews,—a Gospel for a time held as authority by some of the early scholars of the Church. In that it is said, Joseph was the father, and the Holy Spirit, the mother of Jesus; but he is still regarded as a man. A recent orthodox authority has startled his friends by the most consistent view of the case in the history of orthodox Protestantism. Like begets like. If God is made man by being born of a woman, he inherits the woman's nature and defects. That nature, in the Latin theology, is sinful. The God-man is then sinful. He needs then regeneration, and gets it by another miracle. The advantage of this is that it better qualifies God, as a man and Saviour, to assure men that He not only understands their sufferings, temptations, and wants, but has tasted sin and Himself been saved. The Romanist escapes this dilemma by having not less miracle but the same, only having it take effect prior to conception. To fit Mary to bear a sinless God she is regenerated before conception. We like Dr. Shedd's view the better. It frees us of the distress over the relapse of

Mary to a sinful nature, which the Romanist and all other views substantially imply, on her union with Joseph. If Mary had a sinful nature at Jesus' birth, in common with all women, she did not have the horrible experience the other view implies when she married Joseph, for she was still just the human Mary. But if her nature was equal to bearing a sinless God-man, or Angel, and then with Joseph brought forth a large family of sons and daughters, — half-brothers and sisters of God, — all of them depraved, not one being benefited by her prior qualifications to become "the mother of God," we have a sad case; that is, Mary lost her supernatural purity in lawful wedlock.

Gethsemane and Calvary testify not to a suffering and dying God, or pre-existent angel, but to a man. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me." This is the language of a man unutterably distressed, — a true man of God in the agony of the profoundest agitation facing impending suffering and death. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt," — is the thrice-made prayer of a man who shrinks perhaps most of all from so early and disastrous an ending of his mission, — ending in apparent defeat, — but a man who is nevertheless obedient unto death. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken [or why didst Thou forsake] me?" are the despairing exclamations of disappointment and lost hope under the dark shadows of a momentary overwhelming doubt. "And Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit," is the description of a

dying man. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" is the prayer of magnanimous and victorious love and compassion in the heart of a man of God for those who are ignorant of the Divine wisdom: "For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," are not the words of God to Himself, nor of a pre-existing being about to return to a land and companionship from which he had been absent some thirty-five years; but of a man of faith and love and submission.

"His sinlessness forbids his possible classification with men."¹ Why so? It is by no means proved that Jesus was the only man for whom this claim might be made. The Bible speaks of some, and Saint John has some striking declarations about those born from above. Jesus for himself, it is said, disclaimed the title of "good," lest he should appear to be assuming more than he was,—a man, however obedient to God. On the supernatural theory, Dr. Crane² has shown triumphantly that Jesus, though a man, could still be Son of God in character.

That, in the Divine Providence, Jesus was a specialist and had the limitations of a specialist, is seen in his evident ignorance of the physical world. He was familiar with the ordinary aspects of nature and the pastoral life of his country, as abundantly witnessed in his preaching. That he had any conception of the universe such as we have to-day there is not the least

¹ Joseph Cook, "Robert Elsmere," in *North American Review*. January, 1889.

² *Jesus The Christ*: Stephen Crane, D.D.

evidence. Had he been the all-knowing God and the Maker of the World, or if he as a supernatural man had understood the science of our day, it must have occurred to not a few that it is strange he did not speak one authoritative word to confirm Genesis and set the world right on some of the physical problems, and so have warded off the long warfare and miseries incident to the progress of science in spite of the Church.

Some say Genesis was enough, and God has no occasion to tell man anything he can find out for himself. Yes, but Genesis not only had no scientific value, but was always misleading until man, after nearly two thousand years, proved that all the conceptions of the universe based upon its crude cosmology were false.

Nothing can be clearer than that Jesus was a man with the intellectual limitations of his race and age as to scientific truth. Had he known the least of what Newton, La Place, Darwin, and Huxley have disclosed, it would have found at least some subordinate manifestations in his special work as religious reformer and teacher. Nothing is more utterly incredible than that he should have had knowledge of these things and no sign of it escape his lips. It would be a greater miracle than any which the most fanciful supernaturalism ever claimed. It would be a suppression of the most valuable practical truth utterly improbable, nay, impossible to so active, comprehensive, and conscientious a teacher and benefactor of mankind, to say nothing of the psychological impossibility of it all. One who speaks, acts, and confronts men and the great problems of life, society, and nations, as Jesus did, can no more conceal such a vast

reservoir of knowledge, as is here assumed, concerning nature, than he can show himself and not be seen. Knowledge is light, and will shine through every word and act of the true lover of men. Scientific knowledge Jesus did not have. Spiritual knowledge he had in a fulness that made him the Copernicus of religious history.

On the one hand we may say with Paul, not of all men, but of some men: "Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity — unmerciful;" on the other: "Thou hast made him but little lower than Elohim, and crownest him with glory and honor;" or with Jesus call all, children of God the Father. How out of all this do we find human nature? In the masterpiece, not in anything less, we discover the true measure of the artist, the inventor, the author, the discoverer. In Jesus we find the best spiritual measure of human nature. In him we have our highest knowledge of the meaning of spirit and life in man. He best explains all religions, because in him the best in all finds amplest expression. But because in him meet the varied excellences of all, and yet more, it does not follow that his religion and life, nature and mission, are alone divine, or differently divine, and alone express, or differently express, the inspiration of God; or that they are the sole source of our knowledge, faith, and apprehension of God and immortality. Human nature has risen in modern estimation; and Christianity has lost much, but gained more through the scientific spirit which has uncovered the face of the heavens, turned over leaf after leaf of physical nature, re-written the history of mankind, art, politics, philosophy, religion. We are constrained to see

mankind in a unity that includes Jesus as certainly as Moses, and Moses as certainly as Cicero, and Job as certainly as Faust. Jesus shows us God in man, not a man as God; and seeing God in him so clearly, we turn and find God in other men and in ourselves. After Newton pointed men to the law of gravitation, lo! they found it easily everywhere. All had the mind of Newton. As Paul said, "We have the mind of Christ." Newton was a discoverer; so was Jesus. One saw a law of the outward, the other of the inward universe. Neither Newton, nor any one since, could tell what gravitation is,—only that it is the something that pulls and holds and unites, all at the same time, and is everywhere; so Jesus no more tells us what God is, only that He is what he himself is in spiritual nature,—Spirit; and the Father of Spirits is Love, which draws and holds and unites. And when men are told this, and with the mind of Christ look forth and look within, they see God everywhere in all the order and beauty of nature, in all the love and faith and hope, and friendship and justice and truth, and joy and sympathy, that ever the world knew.

But Jesus was no more outside of the limitations of human nature than was Newton. Man is by nature no more intellectual than spiritual or religious. It is natural to assume that the set of faculties fitted to deal with, and make progress in, the discovery of law and truth in the fields of science and philosophy are no more adapted to their work than are man's moral and spiritual faculties for their ends and objects: life and God. There is no circumstance or reason which calls for a supernatural man, or a

miraculous change in men, for progress in the latter case, that does not apply equally in the first. The old dogma of total depravity was logical, on the assumption of man's fall in Adam. The fall carried down man's reason as well as his moral nature ; put out the eyes of the intellect as well as the eyes of the soul. To meet the case not only a miraculous method of revelation was called for, but a miraculous change of man's fallen nature, in order to have the truth so revealed take effect. When the views of this collapse of reason and intellect began to relax, it was assumed that, while it was evidently competent for the mind of man to cope with nature, and, unaided, discover and utilize all the laws and agencies of the natural world needful to progress, the realm of religious life and truth was wholly different. Here man needed to know things which without supernatural aid he could not find out. Hence the idea that inspiration is restricted to religious things, and that revelation means God's special disclosure of Himself and His commands by breaking through the natural order of the world of nature and man. Then by a literalism that grows daily more and more grotesque, it was claimed that God had restricted Himself to one small race of men, through whom, by a succession of varied but sustained miracles, He worked out His revelation up to the crowning miracle of Himself appearing in the person of Jesus, that man might know Him, and so on to the end. This placed all religions, all life, all history, all races, other than the Jews, on the plane of nature.

He who made the first break with total depravity, and claimed the competency of reason to cope with

nature and history, and so find the ways of God in the universe, took the first step in the path that leads to the end,—the equal competency of all the faculties of our nature to get on in the fields of life and development to which they respectively or collectively point. And if there are truths that man must needs know for his progress which his moral faculties are powerless alone to discover, and if God aids him herein, then it will be found that He is not wholly a respecter of persons and races, or of departments of human faculties and human needs. And when the ideas of the unity and of the universality of light and truth and law and mind and God Himself, are better understood, it will be seen that a gleam of love and justice and humanity in one age or race or individual, signifies God and spiritual competency as certainly as when in Moses or Isaiah, John the Baptist or Jesus himself, that gleam has become a torch above the horizon of all history. And the torch will not be regarded as in the hands of a man made God, but of a man in whom God comes in fuller manifestation through the same faculties as when He gave but a gleam of Himself. Light is light, though from a taper or the sun.

The diversities of God's gifts of inspiration in the authors of the Bible and its many assumed supernaturally guided characters, are no more varied and striking than in the other departments of mind and history. Literature, art, invention, politics, discovery, commerce, science, leadership, open chapters wherein we must read God and revelation and inspiration as certainly as in the rise, development, and achievements of Judaism and Christianity. God

cannot be made a specialist in the latter, and excluded from the former. Mrs. Stowe says God wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin." That is as true, and in the same way true, as that He wrote the Bible, or any part of it. There was no more occasion for God to violate natural law in the production of Jesus, than in producing a Phidias or a Lincoln or a Mrs. Stowe, for their respective missions. It will not be surprising if one day, not so very far off, worthy followers of Jesus in love of their fellow-men will hold that God had quite as much to do with the writing of "Robert Elsmere" as with the dogmas of apostolic succession and sacrificial atonement. The human mind will never rest content with an explanation of Jesus that is not comprehensive enough to include him in God's laws common to the vast world-order of finite mind and spirit. It must be that if supernaturalism is demanded to account for Jesus, it is no less demanded to account for righteousness wherever found in all times. On the other hand, if nature, reason, and spirit in man will adequately explain human experience, events, and development, the rise and fall of religions and civilizations, and the growth of knowledge, then it will explain Jesus the Christ so soon as the deposits of traditions, creeds, and mythological dogmas and pagan forms are removed, which, early and late, the ignorance, reverence, and credulity of men have piled upon him.

The conviction increasingly borne in upon the mind by fuller knowledge of the universe is that natural law cannot be and never has been violated. It is this that makes it impossible for so many longer to believe in miracles as violations of law, even

though claimed to be the act of God. The scientific disclosure of God, as the constant and perfect source whence all things proceed, is a far higher thought of the Infinite Mind and Spirit than that of the necessity of miracles by violation of law to enable God to make it certain to man that He is, and that He cares for him. Hence multitudes in the Church itself with no disposition to call in question the marvellous powers of Jesus, can no longer view them as exercised against, but in conformity to the laws of nature and spirit.

“This second step of faith is the foundation on which all science rests, — that all forces are governed by unchanging and eternal law; that there cannot be any violation of natural law. Even the miracles of Jesus need not be regarded as violations of law, but rather as manifestations of other laws deeper and higher than those with which we are familiar. All progress in science and the arts consists in new revelations or applications of law. There was nothing preternatural or unnatural in the wonderful works of Jesus. They were done by the supreme force of soul.”¹

Another illustration : —

“Miracles are to be regarded not as contradictions of the laws of nature, but as manifestations of higher laws and unusual laws. . . . A miracle does not transcend nature, whose vast reaches of hidden powers and possibilities lie out still before us, but only transcends, in the words of Augustine, ‘Nature, so far as it is known to us.’”²

Around Jesus’ name have clustered the reverence, praise, prayers, creeds, philanthropies, and schools of

¹ J. F. Clarke. *From Faith to Faith*. 1887.

² Sumner Ellis. *The Universalist*. March 16, 1889.

expanding Christendom for nearly nineteen centuries. The vast majority of professing Christians still worship him, pray to him, and preach him as the very God of the Universe. To speak of him as a man only, no more in person and nature Almighty God than any other man, is to all such shocking to the degree of irreverence, impiety, and blasphemy.

To change a current of belief so broad and deep, banked by institutions, theologies, and forms, hardened by centuries of habits of thought, feeling, and dominion, is a task surely begun, and will be surely accomplished as the springs of thought and conviction are invaded by the new and expanding knowledge of the universe, nature, man and his history; the origin, development, diffusion of ideas; institutions social, political, æsthetic, and religious.

That this advancing knowledge with clearer insight and oversight will prove cumulative in undermining the faith of Christendom ultimately in the deity of Jesus, we have not the least doubt. That it will make more concrete the Kingdom of God on earth in the true union and mutual helpfulness and common joy of men as brothers all, we devoutly believe. That it will increasingly exalt and illustrate ideas of nature, man, immortality, and God, along the lines of light thrown from the lofty spirit and sublime manhood of Jesus Christ is already manifest.

X.

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

BY REV. W. E. GIBBS.

TAKING it for granted that the province and purpose of the Sunday-school is to awaken religious interest in the hearts of the young people, to quicken within them the sense of their relationship to God, and arouse them to the fulfilment of the duties and privileges thus implied, the question comes,—How can this best be done? It is a query which comprehends a wide range of thought, and on the correct answer depends the success it is sought to win.

Among many there is one way to this end, which is esteemed most efficacious, and to it the churches have resorted during the last three centuries, at first under the direct supervision of pious-minded parents, but latterly under the guidance of more or less well-qualified Sunday-school teachers. That way is to familiarize the children with the teachings of the Bible,—the Old Testament, relating to the earlier progress of religious thought, being esteemed as valuable for this purpose as the New Testament,—and men have vied with each other in eulogistic admiration of what the Old Testament contains, and in insistence upon its words as invaluable to the directing of the soul to its right life.

It has often been a cause of discussion among the more thoughtful, when reading or listening to these glowing commendations of the Old Testament, as to how much of this unqualified encomium was expressive of the real sentiments of the speaker, and how much of it was purely perfunctory and formal,—the result of traditional belief, the outcome of narrow and one-sided instruction. There is no doubt that many sincerely religious souls have obtained comfort and inspiration from the Hebrew Scriptures, nor have we any disposition to belittle them as really helpful to the soul struggling to give expression to what it esteems as the best life. Yet are they far from perfect in their portraiture of Him of whose providential purpose they profess to speak. However closely they may seem to approach the heart of God, they still are outside that arcanum of life, and cannot reveal the full glory of His grace, so that the attempt to set forth His majesty and might is at best incomplete. The record is consequently fragmentary and faulty; because they who kept it could not know the full meaning of the events through which they passed. In this they are but like other men whose limitations forbid a perfect interpretation of the possibilities of life. So the text of such definitions is more or less marred by unavoidable misconceptions. To assume the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament of course settles the whole matter, excludes all criticism of its text, and compels the acceptance of every word as expressive of the mind and will of God. It thus becomes an infallible book, whose statements must be received as final. That there is a growing inclination to dissent from such a view is apparent not more in

the strictures of critical students of the text, than in the latest declaration of the theological professors, who assert that the prosecution of theology as a science must be on the basis of "the recognition of the Bible as a body of writings, prepared by men under the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit, wholly unique, so that those records are the final rule of doctrine and practice." But such assumption of infallibility has very little foundation; and with every generation it is becoming more and more difficult to persuade reasonable men that there is anything in such a claim to make it worthy their consideration, and a growing feeling that to insist upon its absolute truth will do more to increase doubt than to strengthen confidence.

The Old Testament is no longer a sealed book whose word is to be doled out by priests to further superstition, but is open to every seeking soul, whose right to interpret its teaching, — however the learned may attempt to restrict it, — cannot be taken away. Nor can any pretension to so much better acquaintance with the Divine will, which theological professors may make, be for a moment admitted. The right of private judgment is one which it has cost much to secure, and to give it up now, would be to throw away about all the advantage which inheres in the Protestant Church. As well look to an infallible Pope for religious instruction, as to an infallible theological school, intrenched behind an infallible book. If it is superstition in the one case, it is not enlightenment in the other.

In matters of such high import as religion deals with, reason has some rights, and, among others, pos-

sesses the right to investigate unhindered whatever professes to be or to teach truth. There can be no bar interposed, on the score of supernatural influence, to stop the search without causing the confusion which it is the purpose of truth to prevent. What has truth to fear from the most careful and critical analysis? Absolutely nothing. Why then should her professed supporters take refuge in the claim of infallibility, or strive to limit the right of private judgment to such as shall first proclaim their implicit belief in the unerring truth of that which they are to judge? No sophistries however plausible can more than temporarily affect the realities of life. Let the Bible be open, as according to the spirit of Protestantism it should be, and religion will not suffer though men should find a thousand causes for disputing the dogmas of the schools. To shut off debate by enforcing the previous question of infallibility is the method of the demagogue, and while it may serve to stifle discussion, it cannot promote harmony nor strengthen the control of truth. Truth needs no such adventitious aids to enforce her right to the respect of men. In her unadorned power she is much more beautiful and influential than in any dress of custom, or pretence of reverent mystery, with which the theological schools would clothe her. It is to be remembered that all this show of infallibility is extra-biblical, — a claim resting on the persistent assertion of men, not on any statement the Bible makes. A claim which an uncritical mind allows unquestioned, and which a superstitious mind eagerly admits as a fitting solution of the marvels with which it feeds a constantly increasing hunger.

In the process of mental development there comes the desire to examine the grounds of such a position ; and, to the gratification of every lover of God and goodness, the long-continued pretension is found to have no more substantial basis than a human opinion, emphasized at a time when the leaders of religious thought put up an infallible book as their defence against an infallible Church. And as around an infallible Church there gathered unnumbered mysteries, with which to awe the unthinking and the ignorant until the reality of religion was dissolved in showy symbolism, so around an infallible book men drew the mystic circle of supernatural influence, within whose lines reason was forbidden to step, and in their turn severed religion from reality, and substituted beliefs for facts. That this has had a tendency to keep senseless superstitions alive is undeniable. That it has not made men more superstitious is due to the readiness with which men, engaged in material activities, ignore the unusual and inexplicable. But the veil has been rent in many places, and the emptiness of the enclosure has been manifest. Is it not time to take down the fluttering fragments, and show to all that the mystery in which religion has been represented as involved, has no real existence ? Is it not the duty of such as would inspire to a more religious life to divest religion as much as possible of all perplexities, and show it as it is meant to be, — the light of the soul ?

It may be said, life is full of mysteries ! True ; but it also has points of light, and, however small the spaces they illumine, these afford standing-room whence in safety we can look for other gleams to guide us to

the Way where all is light. Using the light we have, the darkness becomes less inscrutable, and little by little the glory of the day reveals to us the path we should pursue.

There is darkness enough without use of artificial means to exclude the light and increase the mystery of life. Religion should, as it is meant to, help dispel the clouds of fear and dismay which terrify the ignorant, and harden the sinful, heart. How little of such enlightening influence is realizable from the literal teaching of the Old Testament! Let a child whose soul has not yet become acquainted with the "sweetness and light" of the Christian revelation, be brought under the influence of the revelation of God contained in the Pentateuch, and what will be his idea of God; what must it be but of One whose strength and passion must be feared exceedingly? So feared that his thought by day and dream at night will be to escape from such a terrible presence. To read in the darkness of ignorance the character of God in these revelations to the Patriarchs, and to Moses and his brethren, is not attractive, save as brute and cruel force is attractive, but is repulsive, forbidding the confidence which love would inspire, and compelling obedience through terror of the dreadful effects of rebellion. To insist upon these partial disclosures of the All-perfect as literal and infallible revelations is to convey a very imperfect and untrue idea of the Creator. But to present them as the ideals of fallible men seeking to find out God and understand their relation to Him, is to let in a flood of light upon misconceptions so hideous as to be revolting.

Shall we then exclude the Old Testament writings as worthless to quicken a religious life? By no means. The revelations they embody are rich to instruct, if we but read them for what they are. To clothe them with infallibility is to give them what they do not claim, and to pervert rather than to educate and inspire the soul.

Dismissing then the assumption of infallibility as untenable, the Old Testament in its simplicity ceases to be mysterious; and the varied experiences which it records become in the highest degree helpful as guides to the religious life it is desirable to foster. Sometimes it is positive, declaring what must be done to insure the best results; and again it is negative, forbidding certain acts and desires as preventive of the good which religion would develop. There is a great deal of actual power for encouragement to one who is earnestly desirous of assistance. There is also room for conjecture; and men have not hesitated to emphasize what was in the line of their prejudices, though they thus sharply opposed each other in their interpretation of Divine character and human duty. Taken for what it is, however, the Old Testament opens the way to a just apprehension of God, and to a righteous estimate of man.

Nobler or more comprehensive words we do not need than those expressive of the majesty and might of God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," is a statement suggestive beyond any conclusion which scientific research and discovery has yet formulated. To its affirmation consent is almost universal; and it rightly opens the door to an attempt to uncover the secrets of creation. How much of what follows is allegorical, no one has yet been able

to determine, however critically incorrect in the light of modern investigation much of it has been shown to be. So much, however, has become certain, — that literally exact it is not. By whatever process life was developed, the mechanical theory is no longer tenable; either as relates to the formation of man, or to the entrance of sin into the world. That with the coming of man there came possibilities whose evolution has involved life in a maze of temptation, trouble, and disaster is true; but it is as true that compensations resulted from resistance to evil, and triumphs far outreaching the ill effects of defeat. To imagine the Creator as surprised, either by the one or the other, or as discouraged, and eager to be revenged on the life He had called into being, is childish and weak. To say that He in petulant despair gave up the battle as soon as the contending forces were set in opposition, is to divest Him of all Godlike qualities. That men, trying to formulate their interpretation of the situation, did so paint the picture of Deity only shows how utterly inadequate their thought was to grasp the subject. That they should present an incomplete ideal was to be expected. They were groping in the dark, and naturally attributed to God characteristics at once confusing and contradictory. That in due progress of mental and spiritual discernment they came to see more clearly and to comprehend more fully the real methods of God, is plainly shown. That in this they were aided by their great Ruler, cannot be reasonably doubted by any who believe in Him.

God's spirit, operating toward this instructive purpose, found a responsive soul in Abraham, made it

possible for him to forsake the false ideals of his ancestors, and enabled him to catch a glimpse of truth. A faint spark, indeed, it was, but not therefore to be neglected, but to be carefully nurtured. Under such fostering increase of light, as was inevitable, the nobler qualities of life came out from their hiding-places, and a leader results whose feet are set in the right direction, — not unerringly to go forward, but with whatever swerving now and again from the exact path, to make marked progress. The shadows of the dawning day are interpenetrated with light; and though the movement is almost imperceptible, the mists of idolatry are forced to give way. Hope is born out of obedience, and the waking soul is quickened with the promise of trust.

But all is not clear; confusions still cast shadows, and many lessons must be learned before the newly aroused spirit can so much as touch the hem of Truth's garment. Intently listening, however, it hears the message, and though it is blended with earlier prejudices, obedience hesitates not to offer the sacrifice which endangers the fondest hope. The lesson thus taught, helps to rend the confusing clouds of ancient superstition, and God is nearer and dearer now. The seed is sown in fruitful soil; and Isaac bears in his heart a sweeter fruit than Abraham had tasted. The meaning of life's relationship is becoming clearer. God is not a monster delighting in human sacrifice; though terrible still, He is not merciless. Requiring much, yet conferring even more, — a giant yet, whose frowns must much be feared, but not always frowning. Isaac disappears, but God lives; and Jacob, tricky, untruthful, and greedy, yet has

grace enough to appreciate the need of heavenly help, and to feel the Presence whose blessing gives significance to life. Deviate as he may, there is an upward way. Despair may cloud his soul with fear, yet as he cries, "All these things are against me," the All-wise will make ready the means of victory. These legends, clustering around the lives of the Patriarchs, furnish the points of light which mark the channel of early religious movement, and make more safe and sure the way by which their successors may reach the desired haven. The process of revelation is slow indeed, but against what mighty resisting currents it has to contend. Ignorance and superstition are far from the best media through which to receive the blessed light; but when naught else is at hand, men must be content with distorted views, not as infallible and final, but as suggestive of possibilities which the purpose of God will not neglect to make satisfying and conclusive.

There is nothing strange, however, in the acceptance of such imperfect pictures of Deity. They were far superior to what had before been presented, and the devoutest souls had reason to rejoice. So far as they go there is little occasion to find fault. They show characteristics which certainly exist, and however out of relation with each other, they help to a conception of God not altogether ignoble. That all the finer lines are not discernible, is not so much because they were not seen as because the spiritual lenses were incorrectly adjusted making confusion of clearness. God has not changed as the ages have passed away, but as the mists of fear and ignorance have been dispelled, clearer visions of His perfectness have become

possible. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob saw what their thought could grasp, and used such language to tell their fellows what they saw as was familiar to their age. When it is remembered how inadequate the most exact language is to express the idea of God, it can hardly seem strange that attributes have been ascribed to Him which cannot be accepted as rightly definitive of His character, and actions represented as commanded by Him which contradict every just conception of righteous rule. When the authors of the Old Testament, prefixing a "Thus saith the Lord" to laws needlessly cruel and destructive, try to palliate tyrannous abuse of power, they but show how easily fallible men can be misled as to the purpose and method of Divine control. No doubt the Hebrews in their religious zeal imagined they were carrying out the will of Jehovah, and it may be that the circumstances seemed to justify their bloody destructiveness; but to clothe these ideas with infallibility, and to pass on their conceptions of God as indisputable and final, is to insist upon a God whose qualities of mind and heart are simply detestable.

Is it advisable to continue these distortions, or is it wiser to qualify them as the misrepresentations of ignorance? The law of Moses in its simplicity is free from all such hideous suggestions; but the law of Moses as interpreted and embellished by Levitical administrators is a code of customs far "more honored in the breach than in the observance." The inspiration of the Ten Commandments may be admitted, and their finality as rules of doctrine and practice be wisely insisted on. They give dignity to life, — enlarging the thought of man's moral power, and exalting the

purpose of God. The disciplines they introduce to the education of the soul are wholesome and beneficial, while the results achievable through obedience are such as every age can approve and most devotedly seek. Had the Mosaic episode produced nothing else, it were well worth while for men to have undergone all the recorded hardships by which the Israelites were made ready for the important place assigned them in human history. Seeking for the foundations of a religious life, the earnest soul can find here the roots of Faith, Hope, and Love. Keeping these in mind, every step of that long journeying in the wilderness becomes luminous with manifestations of Divine care and goodness. Rebellions, disasters, repentances, and providences, all serve to disclose the processes of growth by which the soul reaches upward. No after declination can mar the glory of those fruitful years of wandering, and it is not strange that devout souls feeding on these truthful delineations of human dependence and Divine superintendence, were filled with holy songs of rejoicing trustfulness.

God is in these eventful years; and if they who were then led by Him did not appreciate the revelation which was going on before their eyes, it was not for want of opportunity so much as for want of power. That want of power made all the after misapprehension possible. When, indeed, have men been able to take in all the grace and goodness of God? It was not strange that these rude and uncultured souls, so lately escaped from degrading slavery, should have seen and exulted in the material advantages they enjoyed, rather than have grasped and made wise use of the spiritual privileges offered them. God was of

more account as their strong ally, in their fightings with their barbarous foes, than as the source of the spiritual power through which they might conquer themselves. What wonder that false ideals were prevalent, and religion had more communion with earthly passions than with heavenly aims ! What wonder that filtering through base prejudices, the thought of God was colored with impurities ! They could not unerringly describe what was so imperfectly apprehended ; could not infallibly teach of character so inadequately understood.

It were a miracle indeed, more startling than any yet recorded, if out of soil so unfit and so preoccupied with weeds, the final truth of spiritual life could be produced. Nor was it. Erroneous in the extreme is the nature in which Levitical leaders clothed the thought of God. Great He was, supreme, indeed ; but His greatness was hedged about with limitations utterly inconsistent with goodness or justice, — a tyrant to be dreaded and shunned, cruel, cunning, and capricious, who ought to be most closely watched, but who could not be implicitly trusted. It were infinitely better never to allow a child to read a very large part of the Old Testament, than to teach him that these narrow, mean, immoral characterizations of God are infallible revelations, or that the doctrines based on them are final rules for the government and guidance of religious life. Better the densest ignorance than the taint of falsehood.

The teaching value of the Old Testament lies not in its literal statements as unerring and final, but in its spiritual significance as suggestive and inspiring. The actors in this great revelation of the processes

and progress of life did not know how much of God their story was to tell, and so, naturally, their experiences were considered almost solely in their relations to selfish aims and gains. It was not so much the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, operating for the advantage and advancement of humanity, as the God of Moses or of Israel working to the end that a particular family or race should be enlarged and exalted. To make their revelation valuable, it is not needful to lay inordinate stress on the authority of the text as it relates to this or that individual or tribe, but to emphasize the authenticity of that universal law which personal experiences typify or illustrate. That Moses should perform miracles is of little account to any but a very small circle of followers; but that God can and does open the door by which His children shall enter upon the enjoyment and use of liberty, is of great moment to the whole human race. That Joshua should triumph over the obstacles which hinder Israel, and should overturn cities by the sound of trumpets, is of slight importance when compared with what other conquerors have done; but that God's voice calls to empire, and leads the way to its realization, is of superlative consequence. That Gideon with a handful of warriors should put the Midianitish hosts to flight, in any improbable way, does not weigh in the balance with the grander fact that the armies of earth, however huge and heroic, cannot successfully resist so much as the breath of Omnipotence. That Jephthah should sacrifice his chief treasure, and the gift be thought acceptable to God, may not indeed redound to the credit of the Almighty; but that it must be commendable for any man to be conscien-

tiously faithful to his word, even to the giving up of what is dearest to his heart, is a lesson worthy to be learned by every living soul.

These are but a few of the glorious, educative illustrations of that earlier period of spiritual development when the struggle against material degradation was so necessary and continuous. They are full of instructive inspiration still, notwithstanding the vast improvement in whose advantages modern life rejoices. That God is, that He rules over the destiny of men and nations, that He may be relied upon to aid His children, conquer the foes to their right occupation and use of the world, that He rejoices in their recognition of duty, and is honored by righteous service, — are lessons full of importance to any clear apprehension of the worth and meaning of life, and to any real attainment of the good which makes man Godlike.

The spiritual significance of such teaching is invaluable and infallible, however rude and fanciful may be the legends which embody it. The story of David is not of a character to make one wish to duplicate it; but the inspiring song of trust loses none of its melody by reason of the singer's incompleteness. Nor need his imperfections be slightly passed over in the eagerness to hear his psalm. Give him all the credit and discredit which attach to his life, and the devout and earnest soul will still be thrilled with the uplifting music of great desire to know and love the Lord. There is no call to encourage credulity to give force to such high aspirations. The soul knows that the atmosphere in which its power is best sustained is the breath of God which giveth life to the world. It is not superstition men need to awaken reverence for

Divine things, but a reasoning and a reasonable faith. Such a faith can make all due allowance for the errors of ignorance, and yet find in human experience, by whomsoever recorded, what shall serve to make plain the wisdom, power, and love of God. To call a legend, whose frequent repetition has not caused it to lose anything of the marvellous belonging to it, a legend, does not impair its instructive quality relative to the character and belief of those of whom it is told. The obedience of Abraham, the commanding force of Moses, the devoutness of David, the prophetic instincts of Isaiah, are not less discernible though the veil of mystery be removed, and men judge them and their words by the same methods adopted as to other witnesses of truth. Nor is their helpfulness diminished, though it shall be shown that in the hope of exalting these great leaders there have been ascribed to them qualities supernaturally great, to which they laid no claim, and to which they are not entitled. Truth, through whatever agencies revealed, requires no extrinsic aids or adornments to make its worth apparent. Its appeal is to the conscience; and is not less efficacious with an enlightened conscience, taught to discriminate between a reasonable fact and a bewildering fiction, than with an ignorant conscience, which eagerly and equally believes both fact and fiction. Religion really gains by being divested of the superfluous drapery with which ignorant fancy in ages of priestly domination clothed her.

The simplicities of the Old Testament are most advantageous to the development of the religious nature when they run parallel with the experiences of men. Under like circumstances, the trust and fidelity which

made a Hebrew strong and victorious will be recognized as of value to an American. Put the Hebrew upon exceptional grounds, and paint his experiences as especially providential, and the force of his example is not available to help an ordinary mortal; nor will the results of his endeavor be necessarily cheering to modern hopes. It is the possibility of repetition that makes the patient waiting of the Psalmist the source of courage to all who in time of trouble turn to God for light and salvation.

Is it not clear why the Old Testament should be used as a help to religious life? Not because of its historical accuracy, nor because of its miraculous infallibility, but for its spiritual insight and encouragement. What in rude ignorance men found in Divine Providence available for their progress toward the nobler life is efficient still. Emphasized by experiences which their lack of knowledge led men to believe were marvels of Divine favor, but which have many times been surpassed in the developments of human life, these means of growth are richly suggestive of the power of obedient faith to fulfil the wise purposes of God. What this assisted Hebrew reformers, poets, and prophets to accomplish, what this enabled them imperfectly to understand and teach, it still, as the interpreter and revealer of God, can do for souls seeking to know and do His will. What it inspired men to dare for conscience and for country, when ignorance and superstition went hand in hand, it can more perfectly perform with such instruments as knowledge and love furnish.

It is the province of the Sunday-school to improve its religious instruction with the illustrations of spir-

itual impulse which are so abundant in these records of Hebrew aspiration. To bear witness both to the mercy and directing grace of God, and to the unfolding and growth of the Divine in man, the Old Testament is indeed precious. Not as an inspired record, but as a record of inspiration, it is full of the most hopeful encouragement that the day shall come when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." To aid in dispelling the mists of fear, through which only distorted images of God are possible, and to prepare the soul for the revelation of glory which the light of love alone can make clear, there are required just such educative helps as are to be found, by those who will "search the Scriptures," in the experiences of men struggling out of darkness toward the light.

Partaking with Abraham in the promised blessing, sharing with Moses the "rest" of the Divine Presence, enjoying with David the fearless courage born of unshaken trust and undying hope, the soul may hear with Isaiah the triumphant declaration, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear; surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

So read as not the infallible and final word of God, but as the preparative and progressive declaration of His wise and good purpose, the Old Testament becomes the rich treasure-house of inspiring and instructive religious desire and deed. To it the teacher of Faith, Hope, and Love may turn with confident assurance that though in their groping the Hebrews

often went astray, and often mistook the deceptive shadow for real substance, and attributed to God what was born of their own passions, yet in the higher reach and broader outlook of manifold experiment they at last caught faint glimpses of the Divine goodness and glory. He, whom Abraham thought to please with human sacrifice, whom Mosès sought to serve with moral law, whom David aimed to exalt with mingled tears and exultant boastings, and whom Isaiah dreamed to magnify by picturing Israel's restoration, however glad in the self-conquest which made sacrifice possible, however rejoicing in the obedience which the law secured, however touched with the music of the repentant singer and honored by the prophetic vision of triumphant rule,—is yet more and better than any or all of these combined can represent. No complete revelation of Him is possible by means which mortals can apprehend or use. At best, we can but stand on the threshold here; and however much of the inner glory shall shine around us, it is but as a single ray of the ineffable brightness of God.

Witnesses, indeed, were these heroic Hebrews, whose literature religious thought has sanctified. Their steps seize hold upon the way of light, but "these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect," either in their conception of the Divine character or in their apprehension of the methods best adapted to the fulfilment of that purpose of love which seeks to reconcile the desire of man to His unerring will.

XI.

SALVATION AND ITS AGENCIES.

BY REV. C. L. WAITE.

SALVATION is not only one of the great words of the Hebrew and Christian religions, but it, or some equivalent, is one of the great words of all the religions that have influenced man's thought and deed. In its professed interest the globe has been girdled with temples, and hierarchies have gained their power. Its assumed agencies have ranged from the offerings and ceremonial of the fetich worshipper to whatever will promote life in harmony with every law of God written in man's complex nature and needs. With its changes of definition, the conception of the Church, as its promoter, has varied from that of a refuge from a future terror to that of a teacher of truth, and inspirer of spiritual life as the heart of a regenerated society. A history of its definitions and assumed agencies would be, largely, a record of man's thought upon religion; and the changes in thought and effort which such a history would show, would exhibit much of man's intellectual and spiritual progress.

But the theory of salvation professed in the creed is not always that indicated by the topics of the pulpit, and the work to which they call. While the theory may exactly fit in with a creed concerned with "saving souls" from a future terror, the topics of the pulpit,

and the work to which they call, are all alive with the spirit of modern philanthropy and reform,—concerned with saving men from all avoidable evil of the present, and with the upbuilding of character and a better social state. While salvation and its agencies are defined and urged in the old phrases, emphatic words are spoken against the iniquities of business, politics, and social customs. There will be discussion of the relations of capital and labor, of prevention of pauperism and crime, and of destruction of the liquor traffic,—the sermon, perhaps, preceded by a notice of the reading circle, and a plea for the industrial school under Church patronage. It is evident, in such cases, that if the one mission of the Church is to promote man's salvation, there should be a different theory of salvation and its agencies, or a change in the topics of the pulpit and the work they suggest. But it will hardly be questioned that this larger range of subjects, and these various activities, are in full accord with that larger way of looking at religion and life which is characteristic of to-day. Nor will it be much doubted that this larger view is the legitimate product of that larger experience and those more comprehensive views which man has attained. That religion has something to say upon all human relations and activities, is an idea that is fast taking possession of the age, and has the promise of the future. So the presumption is that certain theories of salvation need broadening, rather than that religious teaching and activity should be confined to the narrower range.

Our theory of salvation, instead of being fashioned merely to fit in with other parts of a dogmatic system which we have inherited, or to which we have com-

mitted ourselves, should be harmonized with all the facts which have any bearing upon the subject. There is no subject in whose consideration there is more need of freeing ourselves from the bias of tradition and dogma. This is especially needed for all practical purposes. The subject should be comprehensively studied in the light thrown upon it by our human experience and needs,—in the light of the highest faith in God, the largest faith in the Divine purpose in man's creation, and in the light of all we know of man's spiritual history, the complexity of his nature, and the influence of his environment.

It will hardly be questioned that the highest faith in God is faith in the moral perfections of the Infinite Spirit,—the Father of our spirits. The largest knowledge and the profoundest thought which man has attained, have not found a higher or more ennobling faith than this which Jesus taught, and in whose spirit he lived. The latest word of that revelation which the religious spirit finds in science is in full accord with the profoundest spiritual philosophy of Christendom. It repeats the word of Jesus that "God is spirit," teaching that God is "immanent in the universe, the ever-present life of the world," especially present in the spiritual life of man. It republishes, as the conclusion of modern thought and knowledge, the old Hebrew faith in the "living God." In that new book of Genesis, wherein our latest science traces the method of creative action, we are reading the lesson that the creation and the spiritual completeness of man are the end toward which the Creative Energy has been working from the beginning. Man's history, when broadly interpreted, exhibits the Divine method

in the education of the world as that of a universal providence working for man's development. Human nature, when we study it unbiassed by the needs of any dogmatic system, is seen to be worthy of its place in the creation, and of the spiritual providence which is unfolding its powers. Judged by the most comprehensive survey of its struggles and triumphs, by the noblest souls, by the moral progress of the race, and by the nobler traits of human character and conduct, it would seem that human nature is not a ruin that needs rebuilding, but rather a treasure-house of great possibilities which await development,—that as there is material for jewels in dust, in paving-stones, in sand, so there is material for the saintly and heroic in the common man who is beset with human passions and struggles amid the vicissitudes of life; and that the Divine purpose was to make man as a spiritual being in the image of God, and give him all the development possible to one with his nature and limitations. A theory of salvation held in logical consistency with these ideas will not be any theory which makes it the great concern of life to be saved from a future terror. It will not be any theory consistent with such a scheme of Divine government as might have furnished the pattern for an Oriental despotism. It will not be a salvation which one may seek with an intensity proportioned to one's selfishness. It will not be a way of escape from deserved penalty. But it will be that condition of true being to which Providence and man's nature, relationships, and opportunities call him, which is life in the largest sense of the word,—life in harmony with all those laws of the universe which can in any way affect human life,—

that quality of life which results from the noblest use of all man's powers and opportunities, and by which man makes the noblest use of his existence here.

In studying this subject, we should remember that man did not live in spiritual orphanage through all the ages before Christ came; but that outside of Christendom he has had a spiritual history in which were brilliant passages. Salvation was "of the Jews," as art was of the Greeks, law of Rome, and freedom of the northern nations; but God's spiritual providence has had no geographical or chronological limits, for in all lands and ages some touch of the Divine Spirit has been felt and heeded, bringing forth its fruit in the life of faithful souls. The great religions of the world with their accompanying codes of morals, their sacred books, and their records of saintly lives, are monuments of man's moral and spiritual experience, telling us how world-wide have been the traces of that Divine Presence which has never left itself "without witness in the world." The true communion of saints is not limited by the ages or the boundaries of Christendom. No one age or system has had the monopoly of any virtue or spiritual quality. All exclusive claims that would limit God's revelation of himself to a few tribes and centuries are, in effect, like those theories of vicarious redemption which would exalt the Son by slandering the Father. Christianity is no less Divine in its origin and spirit, if we admit that all is not spiritual darkness outside of Christendom. Jesus is no less Divine if we admit that there have been others who have led mankind in the upward way. The missionary ardor of Christendom is no less Divine in spirit and results because

the golden age of Buddhism shows us multitudes who were baptized into the same spirit as that which, generations after, sent the missionaries of the cross upon their errands of love. There are sentences in the Hebrew Scriptures which show that the souls, from whose spiritual experience they came, had found the Eternal as the God of their salvation; and the same may be said of kindred spiritual moods in the shadow of the Himalayas, beneath Grecian skies, in the valleys of Persia, and by the Nile. He who spake in the "still small voice" which the Hebrew heard, must have spoken in that "voice" which Socrates heard, when he made his life a force for salvation among the youth of Athens. Those heathen teachers and their disciples who lived in a spirit of serenity, trust, and noble endeavor, — who taught faith in the Divine benignity, and commended the virtues of purity, sympathy, and forgiveness of injuries, whose aspirations for virtue and communion with God have marked the spiritual life of so many lands and ages, — are evidence that multitudes have lived in the spirit before the coming of him who is the supreme example of such life, and has most clearly announced and exemplified its law. The question between the great religious systems of the world is not as to which has the monopoly of the Divine spirit, but as to which is the best expression of that spirit, and best fitted to aid its development in man; and the question as to spiritual leadership is not as to which can alone give spiritual help, but as to which has the clearest vision, and can be most a helper to one seeking that quality of life which is salvation. We need to remember these facts, and to shape our theory of salvation accordingly; because

the larger our knowledge of man's spiritual experience, the more free will our theories drawn from it be from any local or transient coloring; the nearer will they be to the permanent and universal truth which we need.

In view of these facts as to man's spiritual experience, under leaders and systems, and in ages so diverse in many respects, we can see that salvation has not been in the exclusive keeping of any creed, has depended upon no single institution, nor upon allegiance, in any narrow sense, to any single personality; but has been a matter of spiritual life, depending only upon faithfulness to the inspirations of that Infinite Spirit which in all generations has been our dwelling-place, — the source of all our moral and spiritual life.

Another truth to be remembered in considering this subject is that man is a complex being. While the spiritual is the crowning faculty of our nature, man's spiritual life here is largely affected by physical, mental, and social conditions. An important part of the Divine will, regarding human conduct, is written in man's physical nature. We can serve the Lord "with all the strength" only as we are loyal to Him with our bodily powers and in all our activities. To do the best in those noble activities which are so promotive of noble thinking and feeling, we need to be physically sound. Some temptations are more readily resisted by the help of a healthy body. Nervous irritability and bad digestion cause many a present hell of wretchedness and sin. The "perseverance of the saints" is greatly helped by saints having sound bodies, and living reasonably as physical beings. The courage and endurance needed by the "good soldier

of the Lord" is greatly helped by resting upon a good physical basis. The low physical condition of multitudes of the poor is one of the great obstacles in the way of their spiritual progress. More wisdom in regard to the laws of life, of health, and of heredity is needed in the interest of the world's salvation. So long as physical life is a part of our complex being, and mental and bodily states are so dependent upon each other, we cannot expect much spiritual progress here along with bad physical conditions. Few religionists will deny that we need to give a starving man bread before we talk to him about his soul, and to raise the perishing classes out of their physical wretchedness before we can do much for their spiritual advancement. In this work of saving the world, we need fidelity to a broader application of this principle. It is the teaching of our larger knowledge of man's nature and needs; it is also in the line of his working who made it a part of his work on earth to feed the hungry and heal the sick.

Neither will our nature reach its highest development, and our life attain its best results unless we act upon the truth that one factor in man's complex being is the intellectual. It needs the sound and instructed mind to find God, as we need to find Him, in the life of nature and the life of man,—to read the revelation in man's experience of the consequences of conduct, and to learn and appreciate those truths which are messages from God, telling us how we must live in order to get the best results out of life. That religion will prove a reliance in the great exigencies of life, which has been examined in the light of reason and fact, seen to be consistent with the facts of life,

and worthy of God's ways as we have been enabled to study them. That code of morals is most sure and safe which has been accepted because seen to be based upon true views of life and duty,—at one with the laws of God written in man's nature and needs, and in the needs of the social order. The religious emotion that has helped the world has been kindled by some vision of truth, and expressed itself in some wise deed of love. Many an unjust or too harsh judgment arises from ignorance and thoughtlessness; and so the comprehensive view that comes with mental culture is needed for charity's sake. Errors that dwarf the soul fade away with man's advancing knowledge of God's ways. Mental weakness and lack of wisdom, full as much as the strength of the lower nature, cause many a man to wander in evil ways. Few resources do so much as the intellectual to make human life richer. The more the mind is strengthened, the more it is fed from all these facts of life and nature by which God speaks to and teaches us, the less temptation will there be to lower pleasures, and to that frivolous life which is the seed-plot of so much evil. There is great waste of moral forces through lack of wisdom in directing them, and much well-meaning ignorance whose deeds the world might well spare. Conscience needs the aid of intellect; for some of the worst deeds that blacken the pages of history were conscientiously done. Reverence needs to be enlightened and guided in its manifestations; for an unenlightened reverence has forged many chains for the human soul. The sound and instructed mind in the sound body will give the best basis for that spiritual development which is man's highest need.

Then we need to remember that man is not simply an individual, but part of a social structure, — his life influenced in large measure by the life around him. It is only the rare soul that rises above the moral standard of his age, and so becomes a force for the higher standard of the future. Few other influences so determine the quality of a man's life as those of the social environment in which he is reared. Strong as is the influence of heredity, it may be questioned whether it is any stronger than the influence of environment. It may be questioned whether the son of a thief, reared amid the best social influences, is any more apt to be dishonest than the son of an honest man reared amid the worst influences. No one will question the assertion that, in the case of most of us, whether we are Christians, Mohammedans, or Buddhists, the moral characteristics of the civilizations influenced by those religions depend upon the circumstance of birth and residence in a Christian, Mohammedan, or Buddhist community. But such an assertion only states a more evident example of the truth, that man is largely the creature of his environment. Different periods and communities in the same civilization are often as diverse as these different civilizations in their spirit and consequent effect. That education which men get through institutions and public circumstances greatly affects the quality of their life. An industrial age will mould a man in one direction who, had he lived in a theological or a military age, would have been moulded in quite a different direction. A paternal despotism will foster in the masses a very different type of character from that fostered by free institutions, which encourage self-respect and individ-

ual development. Whether one lives in a time of war or peace, of intellectual activity, moral awakening, or moral degeneracy, there will be some corresponding results in life and character. He who would be a saint in one age might be a revolutionist in another, and fall very low in still another. An age of reform is an age of moral education and inspiration to multitudes. The crusade against American slavery was a "means of grace" to many, because it gave them the nobler environment of the new age they had created, — an age, so far as they were concerned, of forgetfulness of self, faith in the possibilities of the humblest, and a new ideal of justice, mercy, and philanthropy.

Man needs to be saved as a social being. The triumph of the Kingdom of God requires the right social life of mankind as a means to the right life of each individual. Many of the strongest and finest graces of character have the only occasion of their existence in our relations with each other; and the way those graces are developed depends largely upon our environment. Christianity has been so great a force for salvation, and so successful in enforcing the human brotherhood which it proclaimed, largely because of that social consciousness so prominent in the teaching of its founder and its first great missionary. With Jesus "the individual was but member of a family — one of a brotherhood." In this respect, as in others, he fulfilled, by broadening, one of the great thoughts of Judaism. The Hebrew prophet seems to have believed in the solidarity of his race. His ambition was for a redeemed, a triumphant nation. Broadening the idea and hope from patriotism to philanthropy, Jesus wrought to redeem a world. That title, "Son

of Man," by which he called himself, is no more suggestive of his human nature than of his social consciousness, his idea of the organic unity of mankind. So he placed love to man by the side of love to God as the rule of conduct. A large proportion of the duties that he enjoined are concerned with our relations to each other; so that piety, in the narrower meaning of that word, does not embrace so large a part of Christian duty as philanthropy. Paul anticipated the "religion of humanity" in its doctrine of the "solidarity of mankind." He taught the organic unity of the community of believers. Most of the virtues he commended were social. Most of the sins he condemned were those that affected others. Our Christianity will be most successful in saving the individual when it is most true to this social consciousness of its founder and its first missionary, and so makes itself a force for social regeneration; for the influence of environment upon man's life and character instructs that man's salvation must be sought through instrumentalities for ennobling his environment as well as by means that seem to act more directly upon the individual.

But while these factors of body, mind and environment are so important, the spiritual is the crowning faculty of man's nature; and man's completeness is found in enthroning the spiritual nature over all his life. Salvation may be far off because upon good physical and mental bases there is no controlling spiritual life. It is not so much less solicitation from the lower nature, as it is more restraint from the spiritual, which keeps many a man pure and true and makes his life a shining light for the help of his

fellow-men. Good physical, intellectual, and social conditions for salvation are excellent as means, but insufficient as ends. One may be spiritually diseased while physically sound. Knowledge and mental power may be used in the service of evil. One may be blessed with the most favorable environment while his faithless life seems all the darker by the contrast. On the other hand a feeble body may be glorified by the noble spirit with which it is in earthly partnership. With spiritual vitality and but few mental accomplishments one may do a blessed work. Spiritual power may enable one to rise superior to his environment; may, indeed, create for him a new environment that shall sustain and strengthen his nobler life. It is such spiritual power in great souls, leavening society with its regenerating influence, that has been one of the chief factors in the upward-moving life of man; and the Kingdom of Heaven is to triumph in the world largely through those whose lives are fed from the perennial springs of spiritual life. That character which is the crowning result of man's nature and experience is especially a product of the spiritual life; and man is saved, in the highest meaning of the word, when his spiritual life is most developed in accordance with the law of spiritual well-being; and that law is life in God: the life nourished by communion with Him who is the unfailing source of our spiritual activity.

But what is "communion with God?" Is it the religious ecstasy of the mystic with little relation to the common life of man? or is it not rather that living from the spiritual side of our nature which can sanctify the commonplaces of our life as well as give

us stronger consciousness of the Eternal? Our understanding of this law of spiritual well-being depends upon the clearness with which we hold the doctrine of the immanence of God and the relation to it of man's spiritual life. The profoundest philosophy of religion in full accord with the only Theism for which the largest knowledge of the universe finds place, teaches us that God is immanent in the universe and especially in the human soul. That faith in the ever-present God out of which came the most exalted strains of Hebrew piety, — that faith expressed in the profound spiritualism of Jesus and Paul, — is the faith declared by all who express their belief in the omnipresence of God, not thoughtlessly, but knowing the full meaning and implications of such belief. He who realizes the conception of an everywhere-present God can conceive of no place or time or experience where God is not. He finds a revelation of God in the life of humanity; especially in that law of progress whose evident purpose, as disclosed in its results, has been to give man the highest place in the creation and lead him to still nobler attainments in spiritual life. In all ennobling sympathies of our human life; in those great moments in man's experience when a noble enthusiasm possesses the souls of multitudes; in all disclosures of the Divine elements of human nature which man's spiritual history affords; he finds revealed the in-working of the Divine Spirit with the human, finds evidence that "the tabernacle of God is with men," and that it is this Divine indwelling which is lifting man, with each advancing step, into closer harmony with the Divine life; helping him to make the spiritual the ruling faculty in that com-

plex nature in which the animal and the spiritual struggle together for the mastery, and for which ideas and institutions do their best when they help the spiritual to gain the victory. This faith in the ever-present One tells us that if God is anywhere present in His creation He must be especially present in man's spiritual nature; that He is active in all of man's nobler effort; that the world is better than it was because the God in man,—speaking in man's nobler thought and working in man's nobler endeavors,—has made it better; that

“God's grace is the only grace,
And all grace is the grace of God.”

Only as we affirm the unity of the spiritual life of the universe can we affirm a revelation of God through the spiritual life of His children. The most consistent Theism would teach that as spectrum analysis, from the single ray of light that brightens some chamber, can discover the constitution of the sun, so can we, from the highest spiritual qualities which man exhibits and which his experience enables him to conceive, declare the character of that Infinite Spirit which is forever giving us of its life. So the relation of the Infinite Spirit to our finite spirits is most truly symbolized by that of the ocean to every inlet into which flow the waters of the great deep. In the words of Paul the “God and Father of all” is “through all and in” us all; with all souls, speaking to, and in, all souls. When we most truly live from within we most truly live in, and with God. Those moments of purer affection, of holier aspiration, of nobler will, when the clamors of passion are

silenced and the claims of self least heeded, and when "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit," are the moments when the Infinite Spirit is most clearly revealed within. Such moods of spiritual life are the very voice and touch of the Infinite One; and to heed them when they come, to live for and by them, is to have that life in God which is communion with Him. It is because Jesus lived so completely from the spiritual side of his nature that he has become the pre-eminent example of communion with God and is able to be our guide to its attainment. That which was the unmistakable prompting of his spiritual nature, which could be instinctively recognized as free from all taint of selfishness, he obeyed as the voice of God. That which came from without, — all personal ambitions and desires that would hinder his fidelity to the inward voice, — he recoiled from as a temptation from the adversary. It is this truth, that life from within is life from God, which best explains his life and most truly interprets his words. It was the complete supremacy of the spiritual nature in his life that enabled him to say, "The Father and I are one," as an expression of the harmony which he enjoyed with the spiritual life that enfolded him. Soul-reliance being the same to him as God-reliance he could appeal to the voice of God in the souls of his countrymen with as much confidence as he appealed to that voice speaking out of any ancient Scripture. And it is this same reliance on God as revealed in man's spiritual nature that has given power to all spiritual leaders of the race and made their lives forces for salvation. Spirituality, about which there is much indefinite discourse, is no undefinable mystery. It is that rule of

the spiritual nature in our complex being when conscience and the holier affections are the controlling forces of our life. Life in accordance with the law of spiritual well-being is simple, straightforward, and natural. We are in that way of salvation when we obey that divine voice which speaks out of our nobler selves. Communion with God is through communion with the divine in man in which the Infinite most clearly reveals Himself and His will. Living in the spirit is salvation because it is the life to which God calls by all the nobler and more enduring powers of our nature. In the degree that we cultivate our spiritual powers and make them sovereign in our lives, rely upon our nobler selves and develop the natural pieties of the heart, our lives are in contact with the Divine life and in accord with the law of spiritual well-being.

In the light of these truths we have been seeking to state we would answer the questions: "What must I do to be saved?" and "How should we work for the salvation of the world?" The agencies of salvation are manifold. Because man's spiritual life is so affected by the physical, mental, and social conditions with which it is here involved, the improvement of those conditions will have its due effect in bringing the best results out of life. Whatever helps a man to make the most of himself in a complete manhood is an agency in the work. The call to work out our salvation is a call to make the most of ourselves physically, intellectually, and spiritually, — a call to obey every law of God written in our complex nature.

Not in any passiveness of belief or feeling, but by a noble activity, is our salvation advanced. The spir-

itual man decays when the nobler effort ceases. We draw near to God in an expanding spiritual life when we are working His will in our activities, listening to His voice in our moral nature, thinking His thoughts after Him in our clearest reason and our growing knowledge of His universe, and feeling His love in our unselfish affections. Our individualism, which so easily runs to selfishness, needs the corrective of zeal in behalf of the welfare of all. Working for others, and working with others for noble ends, give a vigor to the soul's life not possible to any selfish solitary seeking for individual salvation; and he who heeds the call to forgetfulness of self in any noble service lifts his life into new and purer atmospheres: above the vulgar strivings of those who live for self alone in an atmosphere so stifling to all spiritual nobleness. Not one such new birth, but many, is our need. So far as in us lies we must create the more favorable environments we need. Most of all it is the spirit which quickeneth. It is fidelity to the one "true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" which can best release us from the thralldom of sin and secure us in our inheritance as heirs of salvation. All words of spiritual quickening which have come from that light, all inspiring lives in which it has been manifested and which can help us to kindle a kindred flame, and fellowship of the spirit of him who so fully manifested that light and walked in it, will help us to find Him who is most truly found within. Helped by them to greater sincerity, aspiration, love, and helpfulness, the more readily will the gates of the soul open heavenward and the inward ear be quickened to hear what God shall speak within;

and the more faithfully shall we follow what the Spirit bids.

Man can save his fellow-man only as he helps him to help himself by awaking him to a sense of his better possibilities, helping him to realize them and creating for him better environments. Whatever wakens the dormant capacities for goodness or clears the way for such wakening influences, or kindles earnestness in behalf of a noble purpose, or establishes and strengthens any moral principle, or in any way stimulates the nobler activities of life, is an agency in this work.

But to do the best work for ourselves or others we must work for all. Social and individual regeneration are mutually related to, and inextricably involved with, each other. So linked together are all destinies in this organic unity of the race that it may be questioned whether any will be absolutely saved until all are. Our own welfare is at stake in the welfare of all. Efforts for the salvation of the individual and the salvation of the world are most wisely directed when they go hand in hand. The final failure of much evangelistic work is because with effort for the regeneration of individuals there is lack of effort for regeneration of the conditions that environ them and soon drag them down. The church sends them forth with ennobled desires and better resolves; but the saloon, or other den of infamy, tolerated in the shadow of the temple's walls, spreads its allurements in their way; or some hard condition of their life, or real or fancied grievance in our social or industrial policy, soon stifles the better life that, with more favorable environment, might have developed into an enduring

beauty and strength. The world will never be saved by a Christianity that cultivates or tolerates the spirit of *laissez faire* toward social evils, political corruption and oppression, or industrial injustice. The world is to be saved by world-wide sympathies that shall rise above class or race or creed, resulting in justice, love, and helpfulness toward all. If the command to love our neighbor is "like unto" the command to love God, then social science is as much needed as theology for the salvation of the world. For such salvation means that the world is to be humanized; that the collective conscience is to be enlightened and quickened; that justice, mercy, and love are to govern society; that art, education, industry, and religion are to ennoble human life until the world is built up into a kingdom of God. There must be that work for man's physical and mental well-being and that improvement of his environment which will give the best conditions for spiritual life. With wiser and larger views of life and its relations, with harmonious relations in a righteous social order, the life of the spirit will more largely prevail; and so the true message of salvation will tell us how to live divinely in all the powers of our complex nature and in all the natural and inevitable human relations.

To promote this work the Church has the broadest mission and largest field of activity to which any institution was ever called. Nothing that can in any way affect life and character is foreign to it. It has, as its especial legacy, the inspiring life and quickening word of Jesus and the life and thought developed through his spirit in the world. It has the resources of modern knowledge, which need only the quickening

of Christian love to do greater work for human help than any wrought of old. It must be "a living force in matters of temporal concern" as well as for the higher life. By its teaching of social reform and by all helpful and enlightening agencies it must minister to physical, mental, and social needs as means to its work of spiritual quickening.

And the pulpit of such a church must stand for the broadest thinking, the most comprehensive teaching, moral definiteness and courage and spiritual earnestness and inspiration, that through its word the spirit of the Christ may sanctify all the activities of life.

XII.

THE PERMANENT VALUE OF THE BIBLE.

BY C. W. TOMLINSON, D.D.

MR. MOODY is reported as having remarked upon a certain occasion, "I know that the Bible is inspired, because it inspires me." That saying touches the quality wherein lies at once the value and the evidence of all divine truth. Only as it can move and mould men, is any religious teaching of worth. It may be axiomatic to say that only as it imparts life, can we know that there is any living principle in it. But even axioms are liable to be forgotten; and this particular self-evident proposition seems to have been overlooked alike by defendants and assailants of the veracity and authority of the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures.

Is it for the archæologist, the philologist, or the literary antiquarian, or for these collectively, to decide whether the Bible is the word of God? The great mass of the literature which the volume has called forth proceeds upon that assumption. Vast is the indebtedness of the world to the consecrated learning which has brought to bear upon the several books of the Old and of the New Testaments such an amazing weight of evidence respecting their antiquity, their authorship, and their historic veracity. That mountain stands immovable.

Yet the prominence which has been given to such testimony in favor of Christianity — a prominence amounting almost to the exclusion of every other — has not been without heavy cost. Alike in and out of the Church, it has come to be the wellnigh universal opinion that "Christianity rests upon documents," and has no other essential foundation. That impression results inevitably from the customary treatment, even when the claim is not directly made. And does not that treatment sufficiently account for any diminished hold which the Christian Church may now have upon thinking or unthinking people? Personally to weigh well such testimony requires familiarity with a region which even few scholars are capable of entering; and surely it is not a region in which "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err."

If it be said that this is true of every great field of human knowledge, and that specialists alone are capable of proper exploration in any department of science or of philosophy, the mass of men being compelled to take their beliefs at second-hand, the sufficient reply is, that in vital, personal consequence, nothing else is comparable with the truths of religion. Though it be only lamely, we can get on without knowing the distance of Sirius from the earth, or being able to thread our way amid the labyrinths of Hegel's philosophy; but God and destiny have to do with the deepest and most clamorous hungerings of all human souls. Other knowledge contributes to life's broadening; this knowledge is life itself.

Recognizing this circumstance, the old prophets of Israel foretold a time when no man would have need to say to another, "Know the Lord;" for all should

know Him, from the least to the greatest. Forms of language were various, but substantially that prophecy had repeated expression. Surely those prophets could not have expected that the fulfilment of the prediction would result from the universal employment of the rules of literary criticism. They must have had in mind some method by which conviction would become fixed, other than that of determining the veracity of documents. We may make some approach to the discovery of that method by glancing at the now prevalent ideas concerning the historic portions of the Old Testament.

Once there was almost entire unanimity in the belief that the first chapter of Genesis was intended as a record of quite independent acts of creation,—the products of a creative energy which was directly exerted at each successive stage. With perhaps quite as general agreement, it is now held that at whatever points such direct creative interposition may have occurred, the work mainly proceeded by the process of development. Not instantly completed production resulted from each act of the creative wisdom and power, but conditions unfolded from a germinal state; and the six days of creation were periods, each of which, in its immeasurable duration, witnessed the progress of a new epoch of world-growth.

No one is heard to suggest that this change of view necessarily involves the abandonment of belief in a Divine Creator. No one raises the cavil that consistency requires us now to read, not that "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," but that evolution proceeded to dispel the mists. No one challenges the development hypothesis with the record

that "God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." Whatever may be its outcome in some hands, there is usually admitted to be no necessary conflict between the evolution theory and the recognition of a Supreme and Intelligent Creator. The theory has to do not with the fact of creation, but with its methods. Instead of a mechanical manipulator, it shows the Infinite Oversoul, present everywhere in His organizing wisdom and power. The language of Genesis upon this subject holds as absolutely as of old, but with a profounder and more inspiring meaning read there in the clearer light of to-day.

Why should not a similar mode of interpretation be employed elsewhere, with similar exemption from suspicion of departure from the intent of the record? The entire Old Testament refers the events which it narrates to the power and direction of God. Must we thence understand that, in some especial manner, God was present in those events, as He was not then present in the ordinary affairs of men, and as He is not present now? Then of what value are those records to us? They but serve to make us feel more keenly our orphanage.

The distinguishing trait of the old Hebrew people — certainly of the towering master minds among them — was the supremacy and persistence of their recognition of the Omnipresent God. As Greek and Roman had each his contribution to make to the world's treasury, so did the Hebrew bring this thought of the Divine presence and rule, and lay it before men as his gift for their enriching. Whatever of good

befell men came of the favor of God; whatever of ill, was the sign of His displeasure. Every important occurrence was only the more signal display of a hand which was never wholly removed from the affairs of life.

Considering in detail those events, which the Hebrew Scriptures refer in the most impressive manner to God, must not the candid and intelligent reader admit that they are very closely paralleled by occurrences in more recent times, which the historian finds to have had their immediate causes in social conditions, in political ambitions, or in the exigencies of warfare? Take, for example, the dispersion at Babel. Reverent scholars long ago saw in this event an earlier analogue of that migration which, in the third and fourth Christian centuries, deluged Europe from the North. We weakly say that in this modern event there was a Divine Providence, which swept away the growing effeminacy of Christian Europe. More frequently we venture no farther than to declare that Providence "overruled" it, as the generations passed, in the interests of a better civilization. The Hebrew, more fully possessed with the conviction that God is the absolute Monarch of all worlds, would have said that He sent the invaders for the punishment of the lapsed Christian nations. His meaning would have been the same as ours; but very great would have been the difference from ours in the depth of his feeling and conviction. He did say after that manner when recording the emigration from Babel. And what, other than our less intense consciousness of God's presence in human affairs, has led to the prevalent understanding that the record affirms that

at Babel there was a special Divine interference, wholly outside the customary providential order?

When Gideon, having discovered that terror had unmanned Midian's ranks, executed his admirable ruse, we are told, in entire keeping with the before-related conference between that hero and Jehovah, that "the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow." But if we are compelled to interpret that interview in harmony with the general statement that "no man hath seen God at any time," — if we are to place all that to the account of the dramatic style which characterizes all primitive writings, — then, surely, consistency will be served if we understand what is said of Jehovah's participation in the battle, as the outcome of the Hebrew's profounder acknowledgment of the common Divine guidance. At a later date, David, who often attributed the inditing of his psalms to the agency of God, declared also, —

"He teacheth my hands to war;
So that mine arms do bend a bow of brass."

The literature of Israel does by no means deny the operation of immediate secondary agencies; but it persistently holds to view that Supreme Power which lies behind all these. Often the recognition of the Divine and of the human flashes out in one and the same sentence: "O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own;"

"Except the Lord build the house,
They labor in vain that build it."

Such statements should convince us how unwarranted is the confidence with which the Calvinistically

inclined, both Orthodox and Liberal, have been accustomed to cite in their support certain well-thumbed passages supposed to have a bearing upon the philosophy of events. Even could we forget all the human elements which naturally entered into Joseph's consoling words to his brethren,—"Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . It was not you that sent me hither, but God,"—yet when we observe that the same philosophy is adhered to in explanation of such natural phenomena as volcanic eruptions, eclipses, earthquakes, lightnings, hailstorms, and floods, and is even employed to account for skill in the ordinary handicrafts of life, it becomes evident that far too great a strain is put by the textualist upon the language of this Hebrew-Egyptian viceroy. Manifestly it requires no interpretation which will take the event out of the common range of providential sway.

Assigned to this place in history, the event becomes of the first consequence to human beings in all ages. And if the Divine dealings with nations, which are so graphically recorded in the Old Testament, are all to be understood as in the regular order, and not as sporadic, exceptional, and particular,—if they are to be accepted as examples of the operation of eternal moral laws, rather than as instances of God's special interference with the established relations of cause and effect,—then the worth of these events to all the world must be infinitely more than any which the once common interpretation can make apparent.

In that case the events, rather than the documents which record them, come to possess value,—the docu-

ments for the sake of the events, and not the events for the sake of the documents. Once understood as testimonies to an ever-present God, operating to bring order out of moral chaos, the primary importance passes from the records and their authorship to the truth which they unfold. Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brethren, Haman and Mordecai, Daniel and the princes who sought his ruin, cease to be mere effigies set up in a divinely established museum, and become, instead, the undying teachers of truths the most vital in their importance to all nations and times. They then tell us that, in very fact, this is God's world, and that —

"All things obey
His first propulsion from the night."

It then ceases to be of the first consequence that we know whether the story of Jonah is veritable history or moral fable; and the supreme question which presses — a question upon which all history must bear testimony — is whether God secures, even against the will of His called servants, the heralding and triumph of His truth. We then no longer cavil at the Divine element in the history of Israel; but devoutly, and with earnest concern, we ask whether British and American history may not be truthfully and profitably written from the same standpoint.

Once let it become the deep conviction of men that those Old-Testament records have for their purpose the inculcation of this Divine philosophy of human life, by bringing into a strong light a few of the great crucial periods in the career of nations; let them be read as embodiments of the spirit and lesson of all history, — the summary of experiences which go on

substantially repeating themselves, under whatever varying conditions, in all times and lands,—and the old Book will be taken down from its dust-covered shelf, thenceforth a new Book for the soul, a trusty guide in life, and a veritable revelation from God to men. Instead of hearing from apologists, as we have been accustomed to hear, that the historic portions of the Bible are not inspired, their production having required only a personal acquaintance either with the events themselves or with contemporaneous records, we shall find between the covers nothing fuller than are these of the breath of God.

And that which applies to the histories of nations in the Bible must with equal force apply to its biographies of individual men. All those elements of Divine proprietorship which appear upon the broader scale must exist upon the narrower. If God takes care of the nation, He must equally take care of the individual men and women of whom that nation is composed.

It is in regard to individual men and women that the sense of separation between Bible-times and ours seems to be deepest and keenest. We are somewhat accustomed in this day to the thought that God exercises a sort of *quasi* guidance upon the broad stage of empires; but we scale down to the sheerest fanaticism the suggestion that He shapes the daily life of any ordinary person. Yet if there is one thought which more than any other can serve to ennoble human life, quicken it to loftier endeavor, and give to it the repose of an all-mastering trust, it is that the Supreme Ruler of heaven and of earth cares for each creature that He has formed, and cares for each according to its own range of capacity and need.

It was an easy and natural connection, if not a necessary one, which the Psalmist of Israel made when he said, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee." Personal devotion is aroused by the assurance that God does not merely group the race of men together in a promiscuous and indefinite governance, but that, as in the thought of Jesus, His watch-care is over *me*, and over each one of the numberless generations. It is indeed an occasion for gratitude that light floods everywhere over this globe; but that does not nearly so much move me to praise as does the circumstance that pencils of light delicately paint the rose in my garden, and in each one of the millions of gardens from zone to zone, seeking out the lowliest flower, and decking it with beauty. "My God" is the soul's need, and not merely the God of the collective human race. "Our Father" He must be to satisfy our yearning; for no man can effectually sever the tie of sympathy that binds him to his kind. But how can He be *Our Father*, if He take not each child to His embrace,—if He love not each with an individual and personal love?

This thought of the individualism of the Divine care-taking pervades the Bible biographies. Here, again, we are not so much shown what providence God exercised in special and favored instances, scores of generations ago, as in those particular instances, the exhibitions of a providence which evermore circles about each human being. We are not asked to adore Him because of what He did for Enoch and Noah, for Abraham and Joseph, for Moses and Joshua, but to see in their experiences illustrations and proofs of the unfailing and universal help by which God

makes one righteous soul always a majority. These biographies are not isolated in kind and purpose from all other human annals; at most, they are only more striking and impressive examples of such Divine dealings with men as are witnessed in all the epoch-making periods of the world. They find their corresponding features in the events which thrill us as we turn the pages where appear the true heroes of all nations and times.

Nowhere does the Bible hint that its biographies are peculiar in any other regard than that of their eminence,—peculiar as the Himalayas are among mountains. They are presented as records of God's assisting or retributive doings; but in no one instance are they set forth as outside the pale of His ever-operative grace and justice. The very exhortations which are based upon them should suffice to bar any thought that those were peculiar and never-to-be-repeated appearances of God within the arena of human life. Those whose names appear in that inspiring roll-call of the letter to the Hebrews—the saints who “through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens,” yet who “were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword”—are put by the writer into common rank with us; “God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” Thus did he in effect tell us that we take up their unfinished work, and have for our strengthening the same Almighty Helper.

As with the experiences of faithful ones, so with the retributions which befell the rebellious. "One law, one element" is set forth for all times. Writing to the Corinthians of those Israelites who were "overthrown in the wilderness," and of God's dealings with those who there lived low and empty lives, — mere animals in a time which pre-eminently called for men, — Paul explicitly says that "these things happened unto them by way of example; and they are written for our admonition" who live in later times.

Regarded thus, those biographies become as bugle-notes summoning men to forsake all that is base, and to make life grandly virtuous, heroically obedient. As mere fossils from a theocratic age, they have their wonder-awaking period in our lives, and then they cease to interest us; but he who passes on to find that they are not fossils at all, but that they are of a piece with his own being, and instinct with the same breath which sweeps his own soul, comes to know that through them he may learn the way to the Shechinah.

The power of those biographies to help the soul has no narrow limitations. Every noble man is, in his very nobleness, a rebuke to sin, and an invitation to all others to leave the sloughs. Every victor upon fields where the tempter has been met is God's living witness that victories await us all if we but go forth taking the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. And in those Scripture biographies are the portraitures of men and women who, bearing within them the consciousness of God's presence, found in that consciousness the inspiration which made them either the immortal moulders of their times, or the no less im-

mortal witnesses of righteousness to peoples whose ears were stopped. They live in the world's honor after the lapse of many generations; and could the conviction gain that the God who so mightily helped them has neither retired from His domain nor ceased to aid every soul striving for righteousness, their honor and the power of their example would be multiplied.

This view of Scripture biography is not novel. Large numbers may assent to it verbally; but the lamentable fact is that it is at an infinite distance from the idea which actually dominates the Christian world. To the masses the Bible is the book of wonders, not the book of life. People do not read in its pages the assurance of that fellowship with God which is continually offered to themselves, but only the record of His presence in days now so remote as to appear upon the border-line of myth. To the million the Bible, as to its histories, is practically a dead book. The phrase, "God in history," rarely suggests the thought that Jehovah was as really and potentially present when Lincoln grappled with slavery in America, as He was when Moses grappled with it in Egypt; that He was with Adoniram Judson in Burmah, sustaining and blessing, as actually as He was with Abraham when that patriarch set up his altar among the idolators in Canaan.

We shall have a new and real kingdom of God upon this earth, when the Bible history shall be generally read as the earlier chapters of the volume which God has been writing from the beginning, and is writing still.

Passing now from this glance at Hebrew history and biography to the consideration of Christian doctrine,

we enter a field which is almost universally believed to be fenced about with the bars of special commission and authority. "Christianity rests upon documents," is a statement which almost everywhere goes unchallenged. A confessedly weak place in the documents—certainly any considerable number of such places—would result in the general downfall of the great superstructures of faith. Yet when we candidly think of the documents as the essential warrant for Christian belief—however gratefully, and even amazedly, we hold their genuineness to be too well sustained for successful dispute,—does not the exclamation of Dr. Watts force itself to our lips,—

"Great God; on what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things!"

To stake the divinest hopes of man upon the fortunes of any document, or number of documents, is a risk far too tremendous for any soul's profoundest quiet.

The Bible does not propose that. The Messianic vision of the prophets, already mentioned, did not admit of that. The keynote of the entire gospel revelation lies in those words which are directly connected with the prophecy of the universal acquaintance of men with God: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews joins these two predictions in one, as did the prophet before him, and applies them to the Christian era. If we take them to mean only that men's hearts shall be moved to love and obedience by the gospel, then we may think of the Christian revelation as wholly embodied in documents. We may then be mere textualists, burrowing

like moles in the earth of the Bible, and shunning its upper realm of light. If, however, we turn to Jesus and the apostles for explanation of the fitness of that prediction to the gospel order, we shall find answers which the world has been but slowly reaching up to comprehend. We shall learn that they disavow all arbitrariness of authority as teachers, and make their appeals to the divine instincts of human souls.

In the discourse of Jesus the old-time "Thus saith the Lord" gives place to the personal and emphatic "I say unto you." That form of address is taken to indicate the assurance of direct personal or official authority,—as though he had declared that he taught those things as the specially commissioned representative of Heaven, resting them upon his own dictum, by right of his office. But we have only to listen to any truth-centred soul,—any soul charged with deep and vital convictions, any really masterful teacher anywhere,—and we shall not fail to hear, time and again, this very formula of the Galilean Teacher, which is so commonly pressed into the service of dogmatism. Even the successful salesman in the merchant's employ learns early to say to his customer, "*I have this,*" or, "*I have not that.*" The first person singular has its widely legitimate and commanding use. We must look elsewhere than to that old formula if we would learn by what authority Jesus spoke, and whereupon he would have the world build its faith.

He who so impressively warned men against self-exaltation, was not disregardful of his own precept. Charged with such self-assertion, his reply was not a vindication of it, but a denial: "If I do not the

works of my Father, believe me not." Only the evident manifestation of God in him, only that which commended itself to the hearts and consciences of men, was to secure acceptance for him. The authority was not in the Teacher, but in the Truth. "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" He never asked, "If I have been sent from God, why do ye not believe me?" Very far was his question from an attempt to override personal judgment. The personal judgment, on the contrary, received direct appeal: "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" He bade men listen to the voice of God in their own souls,—a voice which it was his mission to awaken, not to substitute.

What is the parable of the Prodigal Son, what the parable of the Good Samaritan, but an appeal to human instinct, to consciousness? And those comparisons which light up the Sermon on the Mount with universally confessed beauty, and run through most of his recorded teachings, are all examples of his recognition of the divine in man as the rightful tribunal of truth. "What man is there of you, who, if his son ask for bread, will give him a stone; or if he ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

In the realm of outward Nature, too, he would have men hear the voice of God. "Behold the fowls of the air." "Consider the lilies of the field." "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." "If God

doth so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you?"

This style of teaching does not belong to one who, by official right, dictates the beliefs of men. There is no fitness in such appeals if Christianity is not to be tried at the bar of human reason and consciousness. They are without relevance if Nature has no voice to which we may trustingly listen, and the spiritual faculty no authority which we are bound to respect.

Especially are the similes of truth which the Parable-Teacher habitually employed, worthy of deepest consideration. They clearly show his recognition of the principle that the soul is the arbiter of truth. Water, bread, seed, light, rest, life, were his oft-used types of the gospel; the fitness of any one of which can be found only in the adaptedness of that gospel to native human needs and cravings. Given an eye in any one of the geologic ages, and science knows there then was light, and light to which the eye was adjusted; given a stomach, and it is assured that there was then food suited to its need. Harmony is the principle which discovered the planet Neptune, reconstructed a preadamite animal from a fragment of bone, and has revolutionized the science of medicine in recent days. Men may mistake; but once positively knowing what that law of harmony requires, the scientist no more doubts the existence of the undiscovered thing than he questions his own being.

Jesus teaches us to rely upon that principle of harmony in the province of religious truth. He was the great Nature-Teacher. Jewish prophets and psalmists before him had revelled amid the scenes of the outer universe, finding confirmations of religious

hopes in the order of the heavens and in the bounty of the earth. By their own uniform examples, they had taught men, what comparatively few Christians have yet learned, to trust Nature in its revelations of God. But Jesus transcended them all in this. They drew almost exclusively upon the macrocosm, the world without; he draws upon the microcosm, the world within. He takes us home to the secret places of truth in our own souls, bidding us listen to our own hopes and our own admonitions, our own voices of encouragement and our own clear notes of warning.

Our own voices? No: God's. In part they were so recognized by Thomas Dick, whom the Christian world has named "The Christian Philosopher." Summing up the practical universality among men of the desire for a future life, he found in that desire a divine pledge; declaring, "I do not see how any other conclusion can be drawn, without denying the moral character, and even the very existence of Deity." He did likewise — as every believer must of necessity do — in respect to the basal truth of all religion, the existence of God. He went to the instincts of the human soul to discover its primary evidence. If we must all do that, trusting to this foundation that which is chief among the articles of religious faith, may we not, should we not, trust to it all else to which the hopes of the soul stand related?

The apostles did so. Not because Jesus had proclaimed it, did they insist that men should accept the gospel. They respected, they guarded, the right of every man to stand next to his God. "Not that we have lordship over your faith, but are helpers of your joy," were Paul's noble words. What force, then, had

his message? With what authority did he speak to men?

When Jesus spake, "the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The authority was of a nature to be evident to the hearers. By what tokens did the people recognize it? Michael Angelo was an authority in art, and Mendelssohn in music. Why? They needed neither the indorsement of conventions nor the seal of schools. Their authority consisted in the mastery of their respective professions, which men who had in them the genius of art or of music instinctively perceived. How else did the people recognize the authority of Jesus, but by the answering of the best there was in them to his word? If that word called into fulness of life the heart-cravings which never before had found distinct voice, and if the divinest within them rose up responsive to his call, what more did they need to assure them that he taught with authority? What sign-manual of God could have been more authoritative than that?

Paul's own statement of his authority conforms to this; but that statement has so far been hidden from the minds of Christian interpreters, that the English punctuation of his sentence robs it of all meaning. He said, "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: *that* is the word of faith which we preach." In the intuitions of the human race,—intuitions which come into ever clearer and stronger assertion with the increase of intelligence and spirituality,—the great apostle found the confirmation of the gospel. To the Corinthians he wrote: "Ye are

an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh." He may well have been the author of those words to the Hebrews which declare faith to be "the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen ;" so well do they express the principle which pervades his writings.

Only that principle can explain the saying of John, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." The fitness of the animal food which the body assimilates and upon which it grows strong needs no certificate from the chemist. The light which the eye gladly welcomes through the years is voucher for its own ordaining. And in like manner, the spiritual truth of God must have its witness in its adaptation to the healthy cravings of human souls.

Jesus rested his gospel upon this strictly scientific basis. So indifferent was he to the "documents," about whose accuracy the Christian world has shown extreme sensitiveness, that the records of his speech usually cite them with great latitude of rendering ; not even the Septuagint — notoriously free in itself — having been adhered to. Evidently Jesus was neither a literalist nor a textualist in his use of the written word. He seized upon its inner principle, content to find there a quickening spirit.

And his own revelation — we have his word for it — was not full in its letter. He declared it to be in itself a perfect gospel ; but he explicitly affirmed that he had not formulated in words all the spiritual truth which was to become known to men. It is in their blindness to this circumstance that many insist upon

being given always a particular and definite "Thus saith the Lord." The world is full of Sadducees, like those who challenged Jesus to find in the books of the law the doctrine of a future life. He found it where they had found only the deadness of the letter: in the declaration, "I am the God of Abram, of Isaac, and of Jacob." They had sought for it in definite statement: he found it in a general principle. "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

The "Thus saith the Lord" of Jesus is a telescope given to men wherewith to search, rather than a map describing all the constellations of heaven. At the very close of his earthly ministry he told his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth." He had revealed the Father, and wakened in human hearts a thousand echoes of that Father's love. With that as the central thought, that as the leaven, he could well leave to the ages the further progress of the word.

Not a prison house, as textualism would make it, is this gospel of Jesus the Christ; but the charter of our liberty. It is the perpetual invitation to make search into the deep things of God, assured that by faithfulness each successive generation shall be able to read more than its predecessor the mysteries of his grace. It does not leave us to lawless wandering. It supplies the chart and the compass; but with these it bids us sail the unbounded ocean.

That men do not now find in the Bible what once they did, so far from detracting from its value, as many think, is prominent among its many signs of power.

The Bible has forever made it impossible for men to find in themselves that which once they found. In a deeper sense than the sectarist who presses the words into his service has ever dreamed, is it true that "the carnal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." They are discerned only as man and society come to be spiritual. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The world has grown purer under the influence of so much of the word as it has comprehended, and in that measure has its vision been clarified. The misconceptions and perversions of the gospel are left behind with the darkness and animalism in which they had birth; and the inspiration which the Bible kindles in us becomes God's living witness to the nations. We do not outgrow the Bible: only by outgrowing Nature and the soul can we do that. But we pass from the deadness of a letter in which the Bible has been read, to the glowing power of its undying spirit. There are not left to us only dry husks from the corn of far-gone years. We have the waving grain of the world's summer field.

XIII.

EVOLUTION AND CHRISTIANITY.

BY CHARLES FLUHRER, D.D.

THE most significant word in the vocabulary of the present generation — the word of farthest reaching and most varied import — is undoubtedly Evolution. It is not a new term freshly coined to name a recent discovery, since it has been familiar to the English-speaking race for at least a century. Nor, as understood by us, does it convey an entirely new meaning. Commonly employed as a synonyme of development, it expresses a thought which is at least as old as the ancient Greeks, who were accustomed to speak of all forms in the realm of Nature as the result of an unfolding process. Conspicuous among these were Thales and Pythagoras, while later the Roman Lucretius gave poetic expression to the same idea in his atomic theory of the universe. Among more modern thinkers we find hints of the hypothesis in the writings of Goethe, Leibnitz, and Immanuel Kant, if indeed the latter, who antedated Laplace, may not almost be considered the father of it. Even in the narrower restriction of the term to biology some of the earlier thinkers anticipated the general principle which has become indissolubly associated with the name of the great Darwin. In the sixth century B. C. Anaximander advanced the novel idea that

men were developed from fishes which, in coming to the shore, had disposed of their scales ; while Empedocles propounded the still more curious theory that the earth held a central fire which threw out shapeless lumps of matter that afterward became transformed into animals and men. Chimerical as these speculations were, we yet trace in them the general idea of development, or that existing organic substances were evolved from pre-existing forms of matter. Indeed, in all the ages there were glimpses of the thought, as men carefully noted the growth of the plant from the seed and of the animal from the egg.

But although the two terms, development and evolution, have important features in common, each being the name which we give to an unfolding process, yet the latter word as employed by modern scientists has a much more definite meaning than the former. In short, evolution is a name given to a method of development. As a theory it does not explain the origin of life, which, when reduced to its simplest terms, still remains as profound a mystery as ever. But without accounting for life, it describes the modified forms under which life appears ; in other words, evolution undertakes to answer the question, How does development take place ? In indicating the process not only does it disclose a law that throughout the realm of Nature and of human activity there is a continual unfolding of forms and phenomena from pre-existing ones, but also that during the process there is a persistent tendency to variation. Nature, for instance, never fully duplicates. However much the plant or the animal may resemble its parent, yet it possesses some new feature which differentiates it

from its progenitor. Now evolution is the name for that method of development apparent in the seizure of these variations under favorable conditions and in making them permanent features, so that at length distinctively new types appear in place of the old ones.

Such being the law of evolution as accepted by all modern thinkers of respectable scientific and philosophical attainments, it has been traced as operating in almost as many different directions as there are branches of human research. Laplace and those of his school, which embraces all modern astronomers, employ it to account for the formation of worlds. Geologists like Lyell and Geike regard it as the process by which slow and continuous changes were effected in the formation of the earth's wondrously engraved crust. Darwin, Huxley, and others show how it works in the realm of biology. Tylor, Lubbock, and Herbert Spencer — the latter the most comprehensive of all — have employed it to explain the social development of the race. And thinkers like Bagehot have shown how it accounts for the growth of nations. Whatever his special field of study, the true evolutionist maintains that the phenomena which he records are produced by development from a preceding type through a variation so slight in the successive stages of the change as to be noticeable only in accumulated results.

This is the modern doctrine of evolution. Perhaps it need not be said, and yet it may be well to say it, that it is not identical with what is called Darwinism. Evolution is a larger and more comprehensive word. Darwinism is the name which has been given to the

application of evolution to biology, in an attempt to account for the origin of species "by variation and natural selection;" and while it is true that every disciple of Darwin is an evolutionist, it is not at all true that every evolutionist is a Darwinian. A very large proportion — perhaps the majority of scientists — affirm that "natural selection" is inadequate to account for the origin of species.

Now if evolution is the name for a universal process by which everything around us came into its present shape, then it becomes important for us not only to know its meaning, but also to determine whether systems or opinions to which we have given adherence are warranted by it. Should it prove otherwise, then not only are they out of line with the scientific and philosophical thought of our age, but if evolution is the fundamental law of the universe, then they are out of harmony with the very nature of things.

Among these systems we must reckon religion. Is it adequately accounted for by this law? Are the various types in which it appears among men the result of this evolutionary process, or did they come into existence in some other way?

It requires but little acquaintance with the more important religious systems of the world to learn that each lays claim to a supernatural origin; that in some remote period the religion was revealed to men in an extraordinary and exceptional way; that instead of growing out of man's moral nature it was given to him by a special intervention from on high. It is readily conceded that all the arts, sciences, civil and social institutions known to man were developed from his original endowment; but religion has been

regarded as a thing so sacred and apart from the common order as to require a direct action of Deity in its behalf. So it has been treated as if it were a code framed in heaven and then conveyed to men on earth, very much as an ambassador receives the instructions of a potentate, which he transmits to his charge. Such is the claim which every religion makes in its own behalf. Yet manifestly it is a claim which cannot be admitted without destroying the special authority of each, and therefore it has been the fashion of votaries of particular systems to lay exclusive claim to a direct supernatural origin for their own. This is still the attitude of a large majority of those who accept our Bible as their religious charter. Most of them are quite willing to admit that the religions known as "pagan" may have been developed out of man's moral nature; but while deeming this the method pursued with the larger portion of humanity they contend that an extraordinary sanction was given to the Hebrew Scriptures in a direct revelation from God. But there would seem to be no valid reason for making this exception. The unprejudiced mind fails to discern what there was in the Hebrew race or situation, that God should deviate from the uniform method and grant a special revelation, while other nations, just as near to Him and just as deserving, were left to form a religion as best they could. No doubt the supposition is flattering to the vanity of those who entertain it, but it seems entirely unreasonable when the character of other religions is carefully examined. If, as conceded by Christians, all other known religions may have been evolved through human experience, — they containing doc-

trines and precepts identical with our own,—then why may not the same process have been followed by the Christian system? Indeed, why may not that be the most complete evolution of religion? Every rational consideration points in this direction, and a comparison of the Christian with other systems confirms the hypothesis. It is found that all religions have the same general structural features, their speculative doctrines, their traditions, their code of morals. There is every reason to think that they came into existence in the same way, their differences being accounted for by local conditions. In other words, they are the result of an evolution; and the time will come when the doctrine of special revelation will be consigned to the same limbo whither has already gone that of special creation. The simple truth is, that in the different religions of the world we have a transcript of the development of the moral and religious portion of man's being, just as in his political and social institutions we witness a development of the secular side of his nature.

Then when we look into the Hebrew religion as recorded in the older Testament of our Scriptures, there appear unmistakable traces of the evolutionary process through which it has passed. Not only is it observed by the casual reader that the record is lacking in uniformity and that broader and loftier thoughts are mingled with narrower and cruder ones; but examined in the light which the higher criticism throws upon the Old Testament, it bears unmistakable evidences of development through many centuries of time. Embedded in its pages, like earlier fossils mingled with those of later periods in the upturned

strata of the earth, are to be found traces of the most primitive forms of religion. The sacred stones and pillars which the Hebrews regarded with so much reverence disclose a rudimentary fetichism, corresponding to that of the more primitive races, and showing that the Hebrews also passed through that stage of development on their way to the worship of the one living and true God. Even their monotheism, perhaps their only original contribution to the human race, was a slow emergence from an earlier polytheism; and it was not until Moses' time that their national God, Yahweh, became their supreme deity. The mythical features of their religion are illustrated in such examples as Enoch, Samson's exploits, and Jonah, and suggest lingering traces of primitive solar worship which they inherited from their ancestors. Besides, although no one will question their remarkable genius for religion, still, there are overwhelming proofs that their system was largely shaped by their national environment. Egyptian, Babylonian, and Persian thought and customs have left almost as distinct traces of their influence upon the Hebrew religion as upon the monuments of the Nile or the tablets of Nineveh. The religion of the ancient Hebrews was an evolution, like that of the heathen around them.

Coming to a more direct consideration of Christianity, we find it universally recognized as a plant growing out of the older Hebrew stock. Although that must be regarded as a forced and arbitrary construction which sees frequent types of Christ in the Old Testament pages, since even the prophets had no such spiritual teacher as he in mind, still, we must look upon the Christianity of Jesus as a further and

fuller development of the Hebrew system. But for that system, probably no such teacher as Jesus of Nazareth would ever have been. Born and reared a Jew, and inheriting Hebrew traditions, yet he was a cosmopolite in thought. Endowed with remarkable spiritual powers, and with sympathies that swept beyond all national prejudices and boundaries, we have in him the conditions for formulating a broader and a loftier type of religion than ever his countrymen believed. In fact, it may well be doubted whether he intended to inaugurate any new religion. Rather he appears as one, who, finding the narrowness and hollowness of decaying Judaism repulsive to his earnest nature, sought to reform and enlarge the system of his fathers. He accepted the erroneous Jewish cosmogony and the Persian demonology which had been incorporated into the Hebrew system during the Exile. He observed Jewish forms and customs so far as they did not restrict a reasonable personal freedom. But he brought a new spirit to the interpretation of Judaism. Under his touch it became something inestimably larger and nobler than the faith of the fathers. As Richelieu said he had recreated France, and as Shakspeare took hints from existing tales and made them into plays more original than the originals, so Jesus, by breathing a new life into the cold and shrunken body of the Hebrew system, developed an essentially new religion. In Christianity, as it took form from him, we recognize certain fundamentals of the old faith which it supplanted, but it is differentiated from Judaism chiefly by its universal characteristics. The Hebrew system embodied great essential truths, but it had made them partial through

a failure to extend them beyond national lines. Jesus' clearer and more commanding vision gave them a world-wide horizon. The Fatherhood of God was a familiar thought to the Hebrew, but he had hitherto been accustomed to interpret it in a partial sense as signifying a Divine paternity for his countrymen only. Jesus taught an unlimited Father with an equal love for all men as His children, — a love like the sun and the rain, embracing every son of God in a beneficent ministry. The Hebrew brotherhood of man, like the conception of all contemporary countries, was restricted to national boundaries, and the Jew was regarded as the exclusively favored child of God. Jesus broke down the walls of partition and threw all the nations into one common family, as large as the human race. The power of love had been felt and exercised by men from time immemorial, and the greater religions had even something like the Golden Rule. But whereas in each case the love of neighbor was a maxim, subject to such limited interpretations as men were inclined to put upon it, Jesus made it the vital and essential motive in his religion, — the law of action of which all others were modifications. All the master minds of the world have shown their greatness by their ability to grasp a few fundamental principles and to set forth their comprehensive significance. Jesus dealt with universals in religion, and the three mighty truths already described are the distinguishing features of his religion, differentiating it from all ethnic types that had preceded it.

In all this is seen the working of the principle of evolution. We have in Christianity the most fully developed religion the world has ever known; the most

complete in its conception of God, of man, and of vital spiritual forces. Still, it bears traces of ancient thought and custom rudimentary to the more advanced and comprehensive features that distinguish it as a universal religion. Making allowance for the mythical and miraculous accretions which have been added to the Nazarene's simple teaching, Christianity is seen as the creation of a master mind peculiarly gifted with spiritual insight and sympathy, and touching in its majestic sweep the whole gamut of human experience.

Yet that would be a manifestly inadequate explanation of his personal power which should fail to take into account the influences that wrought upon Jesus to produce the larger type of thought and life illustrated in his religion. Chief among these must be reckoned that which came from an unmistakably Divine source. With a rarely susceptible nature he was in full communion with that Infinite Spirit which we call God, and which moves through all things as a sustaining, vivifying, and exalting energy. He lived in uninterrupted fellowship with this Spirit. He received it as the plant does the sunshine and the rain to weave them with its own ingredients into leaf and flower and fruit. His soul was like an Æolian harp, upon which the winds of heaven, sweeping through its strings, produce the perfect melody in harmony with the anthem of creation. This was the super-human influence to which he was open, and which quickened in him all those grandly spiritual qualities that have made him peerless among the teachers and examples of men.

Were we to further analyze the environment amid which he lived we should find another influence in the

Essenes, whose spiritual teachings, in contrast with the cold Jewish formalism of the day, had their undoubted effect upon Jesus and his forerunner, John. Besides, he lived at a time when the Roman authority had extended over Palestine, and Grecian thought had penetrated his land. These influences also tended to form the cosmopolitan character of his teaching.

Such were the conditions under which Christianity was developed. The primal cause lay in the grand spiritual mind of its author, who received the Jewish religion as a legacy only to enlarge and ennoble its features. That mind was acted upon by the eternal Spirit that ever envelops men as an atmosphere, but becomes their conscious life only through their in-breathing. The result was the religion of Jesus with its universal Fatherhood, universal brotherhood, and the law of love as the central and supreme rule for human conduct. It was evolved just as all other religions were evolved, through combined influences drawing out the divine elements existing in the soul of its author, and, in a degree, in every soul as well. It is superior to other religions in that it is a more highly developed form of the moral sense implanted by the Creator in man.

If evolution is thus the law of Christianity, — the law of its origin and of its life, — then of course the Christian religion must be interpreted from the point of view of this acknowledged principle. Thus interpreted we shall detect in it the great forces and movements that appear in the constitution and trend of the universe. Hence we find in both the recognition of an omnipresent energy, an ever-vivifying Power that moves through all things, from atoms to

men, and links all together in an indissoluble unity. Science may exclaim in the words of Goethe, —

“ Who knows his name ?
Who dares proclaim —
Him I believe ?
Who so can feel
His heart to steel
To say, I know him not ? ”

But we call it God. It is not a God of intermittent activity, the author of a natural order which proves insufficient to serve His sublime purposes. It is a God whose laws are so adequate, comprehensive, and uniform, that they are the unchanging modes of a force, on the lower plane of life experienced as energy, and on the higher as wisdom and love. Evolution recognizes this force. However far backward it may take us in thought, after it has resolved all organic forms into their simplest elements, it still must admit the existence of a Power or Life in which there is involved all that is ultimately evolved. This power is the God of Christianity, the same that keeps atoms and suns in their courses, and answers the craving heart of man with a sense of paternal love. Yea, in the Father-God of Christianity we have the highest interpretation which the mind of man has reached, through development, of that Power which pervades and upholds every part of the material universe.

Evolution and Christianity set a similar estimate upon man. The former recognizes no time in the past when man was perfect or the earth was a paradise. Its fundamental feature is that the higher forms emerge from the lower, not by leaps, but by an almost insensible gradation. Although it admits of reversions, yet these are incidental to the general upward

movement, as the depressions in the waves of the sea occur on a rising tide. Evolution therefore gives no countenance to the moribund dogma of the fall of man. On the contrary, it regards the race as having begun in the lowest estate, mentally, morally, and socially, to rise through struggle and conflict from savagery to barbarism and from barbarism to civilization. It agrees with our interpretation of Christianity, that man is subject to that law by virtue of which growth is a necessity of his being. For him, perfection is not in the past, but in the future, if, indeed, with his ever-unfolding powers, he can arrive at that point where it may be said, "This is the end."

Christianity and evolution also are in agreement with regard to the method of man's improvement in his moral estate. The law of evolution is that in variation the better feature has an advantage which secures its survival, while the less deserving and therefore the less useful falls away, as Carlyle says the harsh notes of the Scottish bag-pipe player fall out when heard from a distance, leaving only the purer harmony to charm the ear. In this we see something akin to what in the terms of religion is called salvation. It is the elimination of evil and error from the character of man through the upward push of Nature, as he responds to the transforming touch of Divine truth and love.

Finally, since evolution and Christianity may be considered different names for one great process, we read in both the prophecy of the grandest possible future for man. If we come upon the foundations of a building, and note the courses of stone reaching down to an unmeasured depth, we conclude that no

mean and diminutive superstructure is intended to rise from the walls, but one of towering grandeur, commensurate with the ample preparations. So with man ; the farther backward we trace him, the farther forward we must project him. If through ages of struggling he has developed to what he is, in this fact we have the assurance of an immeasurable growth. Grand as are his powers and achievements to-day as compared with those of the past, who dare say that the limit has been faintly approximated by any human soul? Who shall circumscribe its possibilities for good? Who shall undertake to say that all of man's faculties have yet been born? A part of that orderly movement which sweeps onward to increasingly better and wider results, man, as the highest creature in space or time, must accomplish his destiny and in moral perfection complete the unity of the universe. It is the larger thought spoken by him who said, "I will draw all men unto me." It has found expression in the grandest poem of our century, —

" One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

XIV.

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS.

BY REV. MARION D. SHUTTER.

THE passage that we call the "Sermon on the Mount" is probably a collection of sayings spoken by Jesus at different times and on different occasions. There is no such essential unity as to make these chapters a connected discourse. To the original words spoken by Jesus on the mountain, other precepts were no doubt added by those who wrote the Gospels. The chapters taken together represent the fundamental doctrines of the New Kingdom and give a general view of the teachings of the Master. To borrow the image of Augustine: "The Sermon on the Mount is a great sea, whose smiling surface breaks into ripples at the feet of our little ones; into whose unfathomable depths the wisest must gaze with a shudder of amazement and a thrill of love."

The way in which these teachings affected the people is indicated by the statement that "They were astonished at his doctrine." The reason was, that "He taught as one having authority and not as the scribes." The people recognized the fact that a new force was among them. A breath from Heaven was stirring the dry bones of tradition. The world instinctively acknowledges a master. Let a real man

arise, and the sound of his trumpet will not fail to rally an army. Whoever has a genuine word for his fellows may be sure that his message will not fall fruitless to the ground. The voice of the Eternal will be heard from whatsoever lips it issues.

“The word unto the prophets spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
The word by seers or sibyls told,
In groves of oak or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world has never lost.”

Jesus taught with authority. He did not appeal to it; he carried it in himself. He taught, not as one who stood outside the truths he spoke, not as one who was describing the experiences of another, not as one who was at all doubtful about what he was uttering; but as one who held converse with God, as one who thought and felt and experienced for himself. “He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul. Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished with its beauty, he lived in it and had his being there. Alone in history, he estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates Himself in man and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of His world.”

In what sphere is the authority of Jesus exercised? We look to him as an authority in the realm of moral and spiritual truth,—in this region and in no other. He was no scientist or philosopher, he was no logician or historian, he was no painter or sculptor. In matters that pertain to these departments we look else-

where for instruction ; we do not find it in the Sermon on the Mount. When we seek enlightenment on matters that pertain to God, conscience, and duty, we come to him who said : " I am the light of the world ; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." He was the world's highest example of goodness, the divinest man of all time. He was not God, as many regard him, but the clearest and sublimest manifestation of God in human nature ; the first-begotten of the Father, not in the order of time, but in the dignity of his character and in the importance of his mission. Within the sphere that he filled and in the execution of his mission, " He spake with authority." Asks James Freeman Clarke : " If in the realm of thought, the ages have produced a Homer, a Plato, a Socrates, a Dante, an Alfred, a Washington, why not one who, though human and tempted like ourselves, has been free from sin ? Why not one who has risen to such a summit of vision as to see God's truth plainly and fully, and so become a perfect revelation of it in word and life ? "

It is to be noted that the truths which Jesus taught were self-evident. They appealed directly to the understanding and heart. They did not need to be buttressed with argument. They rested upon no process of formal logic. Only one or two fragments of conversation in which he indulged in anything like argument (and then only for a moment) have come down to us. Neither did his authority rest upon his miracles. It was entirely independent of them. This is not the place for a general discussion of that subject ; but whatever may be thought of miracles, so

much seems certain, that the authority of his truth was in the truth itself, and not in anything outside of it. It carried authority because it appealed to the human heart. It satisfied the needs of men who were weary of dogma and ritual. It answered the cry of hearts whose experiences had made them feel desolate and outcast in the world. "Truth, eternal truth," says Max Müller, "requires no credentials, but is to rule the world in her own right; nay, is to be welcomed all the more warmly when she appears to the human heart, unadorned by priestly hands and clad only in her own simplicity and majesty." "Can miracles work conviction?" asks Novalis, "or is not real conviction, this highest function of our soul and personality, the only true God-announcing miracle?" Neither did his authority rest upon his Messianic dignity, for he had not then assumed it; nor upon his supernatural origin, for there is no reason to believe that those who thronged about him had heard of it. His authority was that of the truth itself and of no external circumstances surrounding or accompanying it.

*"For truth has such a face and such a mien,
As to be loved needs only to be seen."*

The authority of Jesus was the authority of deep experience. The method of the Divine instruction is the same for all of us,—through the soul. Many seem to assume that Jesus had seen God face to face and received from Him the truth he was to teach, as a schoolboy receives his alphabet or multiplication table from his instructor. We have his own words: "No man hath seen God at any time;" but he adds that "the Son hath declared Him." Even in the next

world we probably shall not see Him. Our means of communication then with the Father will in all probability be just what they are here. Jesus says that "The Son hath declared Him," — revealed Him, expressed Him, not beheld Him. How did Jesus learn the will and receive the message of his Father? Not in audible words from the skies, but through his own soul, as his own experience. In this way he received the word of God. The way to the deepest truth of the Eternal must be trodden with bleeding feet. Every word of wisdom has in it the anguish of a heart pang. "He learned," we are told, "by the things he suffered." His life developed in the same conditions in which our lives develop. Men forget that he did not come into this world full grown. He came as we all come, a human babe. "He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," as the years went by. From his daily experiences he learned many lessons. His life was perfectly natural. Our lives are, in large measure, unnatural. When we are brought back to Nature we shall live as he did. The life of Jesus is not some new and higher plan God has devised; it is His original plan for every one of us. Christ's life is the normal type of humanity.

Jesus was thus identified with us. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." He felt the furnace breath of our trials, he measured the force of the temptations that assail us, he sorrowed as we sorrow. His tears fell upon the grave of love. In his own experiences he learned our needs. In his own experiences he found victory over sin and sorrow. The message that God gave him in the depths, he

gives with authority to us. But he speaks to us, not only from the valley, but also from the mountain. There were times of spiritual uplifting. He knew joy as well as sorrow; he knew the peace of God which passeth understanding; he knew the gladness of obedience. He therefore speaks with authority when he says: "Come unto me and I will give you rest." It has been well said that "The office of the teacher is to translate life into truth."

The authority of Jesus was the authority of keen spiritual insight. Jesus had a seeing eye which pierced deep into the reality of things. The quiet hours in his father's house or shop, his meditations in the fields and among the hills, were full of insight into the meaning that God had written in the commonest objects. The grass, the lilies, the lakes, the birds, yielded their secrets and gave him some revelation of the Father. But this was not all. The other world lay very close; his brow was fanned by breezes from Paradise, his eye pierced beyond the veil and beheld the joy and glory and victory in the mansions of his Father's house. It is related by Sumner Ellis, that in a certain gathering where, in a friendly way, the company were discussing God, the human spirit, immortality, each one laid his word of testimony before the others. One spoke of the necessary personality of intelligence and love; another named the universal longing for a life above the earth and time as significant; another told of a light that had broken through, illuminating his path in an unexpected way, and that he actually beheld the things of a divine sphere; another told of a dying vision of a friend. At last it came to the turn of Robert Collyer, who said: "I

believe all these things are so as our hearts would have them, because to the highest and purest spirit that the world has known, whom we call the Christ, they seemed the most real, lying in the transparent light of his consciousness as clearly as mountains lie before the eye on a bright October day. On my own sense of the spiritual presences which, in my best hours, is vivid and faith-fostering, I love to repose; and on the experiences of a great soul I rest with a little firmer reliance; but most of all I trust and believe the report made by the one soul that has gone the highest and lived the best of any on our planet."

The authority of Jesus was the authority of exalted character. He lived what he preached, and his words were authoritative because he lived them. Words are not to be counted, they are to be weighed. Behind every utterance is the weight of his own character. His lips were eloquent because his heart was sound. When he pronounced blessings upon the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the hungering and thirsting for righteousness, he himself was enjoying the very blessings he pronounced, for he was meek and merciful and pure in heart. When he taught love to God and love to man, he was himself the example of the love he taught. Thus "the word indeed became flesh and dwelt among men." That verse does not teach the pre-existence of Jesus, but it does teach that a divine message for men was embodied in the character of Christ, and is authoritative when stated in precept, encouragement, or admonition, because it expresses the character behind it. Other teachers had

given the world many of the thoughts he gave, but none embodied, as he did, those thoughts in his life. By doing this, he gave new force to everything he uttered, though others before him had spoken the same truths. There is a difference between describing a truth and putting the breath of life into it; between a painted flower and one that, rooted in the earth and drinking the sunlight, unfolds its beauty and exhales its fragrance on the air. By the power of his own life he projected his truth into the life of the world. The arrow reached the hearts of others because it had been dipped in his own blood. There is a Chinese legend that the three great religious teachers of the Celestial Empire, from their heavenly abode beholding with profound sorrow the degeneracy of their people, and mourning that their life-work seemed so entire a failure, returned to the earth, in order to find some suitable missionary whom they could send forth as a reformer. They came in their wanderings to an old man, sitting as the guardian of a fountain. He talked to them so wisely and earnestly of the great concerns which they had mostly at heart, that they came to the conclusion that he was the very man for the work which they wished to accomplish. But when they proposed the mission to him, he replied, "It is the upper part of me only that is flesh and blood; the lower part is of stone. I can talk about virtue and good works; but I cannot rise from my seat to perform any righteous act." This illustrates the difference, to a certain extent, between Jesus and many other great teachers who also spoke words of wisdom: Jesus lived what he taught.

We yield to the teaching of him who speaks with

authority, because we find that his words reach us and exalt us. They are not enforced and cannot be by any external sceptre or sanctions. The great truths he enunciated commend themselves to the human mind and satisfy, while they purify, the heart. The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the conviction of immortality, the supremacy of duty, the superiority of that Kingdom of God which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy, — these truths find an inward response that recognizes the moral authority of him who gave them.

These words have spoken to us and speak to us still. If each one of us were to write out his experience, it would no doubt run very much like this: My whole religious history is wrapped up in those words that were spoken with authority. Texts I have marked that leaped up before me like fiery swords on the brink of temptation. Sentences are here that sounded in my ear like trumpets of Jehovah at times when I have wandered from the right. There are passages which, blurred with tears, show where I have been brought, humbled and penitent, before my God. There are words which, in hours of peace and joy, have beamed over me like starry benedictions; sayings that have kindled my pulses and made them flame with zeal. In the struggles of life, these words, spoken with authority, have given me strength and inspired me with high purpose. In times of perplexity they have shown me the way; in days of sickness they have comforted; on the brink of the open grave, they have sustained. This is the test of authority, that the truth of another should become your truth and mine; that in speaking out of his own heart, he

should speak himself forever into ours ; that in receiving his truth we become changed into his likeness. " We all . . . reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory."

XV.

ELEMENTS OF RELIGION.

A Series of Hints.

BY J. M. PULLMAN, D.D.

THE history of religion is the history of the entrance of the Divine into human conditions, and its development under those conditions.

HOW RELIGION ARISES.

Religion antedates history, so that we cannot have a historical account of its origin. "We cannot go back to our primitive religious ancestor, and watch the manifestations of his dawning self-consciousness, study his enchanted attitudes, and learn by actual observation the mode of his religious awakening." We can only infer what the beginning was like from what religion is like when it first emerges into history, from the trend of its subsequent development, from what we know of the laws of human nature, and from our own personal experience of the religious awakening. From these data the inference is that religion begins as a consciousness of God at the moment when man becomes conscious of himself,—that it is an original consciousness, of the same date and validity as the consciousness of Self. The dawning spirit of man and the creative spirit of God look each other in the face, and with the perception on man's part of

a relation between them, religion begins. The Jewish history of religion, incomparably the plainest we possess, begins with a retrospect of the God-consciousness: "In the beginning, God —"

THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION.

The consciousness of God is the essential element of religion, carrying with it the idea of a relation to God which is the developing germ or root-thought of every form of historic religion. The great religions of the world are only varying systems for the development of the God-consciousness of our race. The ideas of Causality and Obligation appear to have been the first clear results of the application of conscious thought to the God-consciousness, and upon these all systems of worship are apparently founded. "A personal affection of transcendent reverence and trust toward a higher personality" appears as the first and the persistent emotive form of religion. The religious *feeling* is essentially the same in all grades of men, colored more by fear in the lower, and more by love in the higher man, until the development is reached where "perfect love casteth out fear." Love to God is the essence of religion, although as in the race so in the individual a preliminary culture of fear and duty appears as the introduction to the higher stage of reverence and trust.

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

Nothing is clearer in history than the fact that man's duty to man has mainly been enforced by man's sense of his duty to God. Religion has been the

energy of morality ; but "morality touched with emotion" falls far short of a definition of religion. Kant's definition comes nearer : "Religion is the recognition of all our duties as Divine commands." Man's consciousness of his relation to God influences every department of his life and action, and out of it has come that recognition of the brotherhood of man which is now so intensely engaged in the reconstruction of the ethics of the world. Religion and morality may have had separate origins, but they cannot live without each other. Ethical culture alone is like an engine without steam. The "enthusiasm of humanity" dies out with the dying out of the conviction of the Divine origin and destiny of man. All the humane sentiments owe their persistent energy to the conviction of the supreme value of man. Passing from practical to essential morality, we find the sense of obligation lying at the heart of religion, and perceive that religion and morality—the consciousness of God and the sense of obligation—are in fact inseparable.

THE SELF-REVELATION OF GOD.

It appears that God enters upon human conditions and visible activities with and through man, and begins to reveal Himself subjectively in the reason and conscience with which man is endowed, and objectively in the environment which compels reason and conscience into activity and development. The revelation of God to and through man is undeniable, since it is evident that reason and conscience are neither self-created nor derived from antecedents which do

not possess them. We are shut up to the conclusion that we derive reason and conscience from a being who has them,—in other words, that the Power which lies behind and within all phenomena is both reasonable and moral. This is the original and normal way in which God speaks to man,—this is revelation; and revelation in this form is universal, because man is homogeneous. This is, in substance, Paul's magnificent statement: "He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek after God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."

Inspiration differs from revelation in that it does not create nor confer new powers, but raises the powers already possessed to a higher energy. Inspiration is an augmentation of the energy of reason and conscience, and appears to come to us through that capability of our nature, that special sensitiveness, which we call emotion. It is an excitation, a friction of our faculties which attracts force from without, as the whirling dynamo gathers latent electricity from the magnetic fields.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION.

The original God-consciousness has developed along two great lines,—man himself, and his environment. Attention concentrated on the environment—the external world—gave rise to the nature-religions, the worship of the sun and all other visible parts of the machinery of the world. Modern science—the

revival of the study of nature — exhibits, as its first crude effect, a tendency to revert to nature-religion. The nature-religions in all their varieties possess one common characteristic, — they are ethically sterile. By minimizing the powers of the human will, they take the energy out of man. By fixing his attention exclusively upon his environment, they withdraw his thoughts from the real arena of the life-struggle, — his own nature. He at first becomes absorbed and finally lost in nature, — a part of its mechanism, a helpless abject of its forces. The history of the nature-religions discloses but one outcome, — the extinction of personal energies, ambitions, and hopes, and the awakening of the desire for absorption and virtual annihilation.

The person-religions exhibit the development of the God-consciousness along the line of the moral consciousness. Man is different from his environment, and greater. Nature is a lower order, a machinery for producing mind-stuff to be energized by the higher forces, the supernatural, the Living God. The objective point is personal character, the attainment of individuality and freedom, and the maintenance of personality forever. The person-religions in all their varieties possess common characteristics, — they are ethical and energetic. Christianity, the most highly developed of the person-religions, is the most energetic of all, maintaining its energy by constant rallyings on its source of inspiration, — the ethical and personal God. I do not mean that in the development of religion the nature-tendency and the person-tendency have kept clear of each other; I am only aiming to indicate the dominant spirit of each

culture. The person-religions have a scheme of nature; and the nature-religions, with one or two exceptions, have a scheme of God.

ESSENTIALS.

Asked what is essential to religion in the abstract, the answer is simple, — the consciousness of God is the essential. But asked what is essential to the propagation of religion, — to the conscious deliberate attempt to quicken and guide the God-consciousness, — the answer takes us into the wide fields of religious history, and into the wider and more difficult field of inquiry into race characteristics, and the state of human development. The myriad processes by which the consciousness of God is developed into its final product — character — are rendered necessary by the myriad stages of human development. Whatever, in any stage, will vivify the latent thought of God is necessary to the development of religion. We are not in position to turn to the darkest and crudest form of religious culture that ever has been practised, and strike it out as having been wholly unnecessary in its time and place. We can only strike out, by the closest study and criticism, the dishonest, hypocritical elements in it. There never was an utterly false religion. There never was, and never will be, a *manufactured* religion. Mohammedanism is called an eclectic religion, but the various elements composing it were not selected and fitted together in pursuance of a definite and intelligent purpose; and its essential element is identical with that of all other

religions, — the consciousness of God. “There is one God, and Mohammed is his prophet,” is a specimen of what is essential in all religious cultures, — some believable scheme, or mode of Divine manifestation. God may speak through Nature, or through man, or through both; but speak He must, or must be believed to, if there is to be a religion. Practically, then, what is essential to a religion that can be taught, propagated, institutionalized, is a mode of Divine manifestation and communication in which man can implicitly believe. That, and nothing else, is the condition of the highest affirmative energy. But as what man can implicitly believe, depends for the time being upon his race-bias and the stage of his intellectual and moral development, it is evident that there will be variety and gradation in Divine revelation, — in other words, that God will speak in more than one voice and language.

“God sends his teachers unto every age,
 To every clime, and every race of men,
 With revelations fitted to their growth
 And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of Truth
 Into the selfish rule of one sole race.
 Therefore each form of worship that hath swayed
 The life of man, and given it to grasp
 The master-key of knowledge, — reverence, —
 Infolds some germ of goodness and of right;
 Else never had the eager soul, which loathes
 The slothful down of pampered ignorance,
 Found in it even a moment’s fitful rest.”

LOWELL, *Rhæcus*.

We are compelled to utterly discard the notion that all the religions of the world except Christianity are false. Such a notion dethrones the Christian God.

But it looks as though that notion had been at one time and in one stage of human development provisionally indispensable to the progress of Christianity. And even now there are not wanting those who say that if you admit that there is a Divine truth at the heart of the Hindu religions (for example), and only claim for Christianity a larger measure of Divine truth, you will cut the missionary nerve. The entire Christian constituency is evidently not yet ready to believe in God as the Father of all mankind. And this may remind us of the important fact that progress has not been universal, and that the same varieties of mental and moral condition exist in the present generation as are disclosed in the history of past generations. This will make us modest in our declaration of what is and is not indispensable to religion at the present time.

VARIETY IS INDISPENSABLE.

The function of religious culture being to develop the God-consciousness, the history of religion discloses the fact that variety, both of dogma and worship, is indispensable to this end. Progress is from simple to complex, and so, by a wide circuit, back to simple faiths and forms again. All the great religions, in proportion to their energy, develop sects which become separate centres of energy. It follows that we must bear for a good while yet with varieties of religion. The magnificent power of adaptation which Protestantism manifests in the variety of its sects, has only the incidental evil of sectarianism to offset its beneficent effectiveness ; and even sectarian-

ism is an energy. Religion is more vital and less formal under this diversity than it ever was under the precedent unity, although that unity was itself a beneficent phase of development.

UNIVERSALISM.

Universalism is a strict development of historical Christianity from its particular to its universal forms,—a carrying forward of the Christian premises to their logical conclusions. The position and functions of Universalism are defined by its origin. It is a branch of the vine. It is specifically *that* branch of the vine which assimilates universals. Its function is to lay hold upon whatever is generic and comprehensive in religion. In every historical development of the God-consciousness, its instinct is to seek the element which is ecumenical, universal. Its trend is toward a synthesis of the essential faiths, being itself rooted in, and deriving its chief energy from, the essential faith of Christianity. Unless its normal development should be thwarted (either by cutting off its roots or trimming its branches into ancient rigid creed-forms), Universalism will develop an increasing energy and catholicity; it will grow affirmative and constructive, practical, democratic, and humane, shunning the deadly shoal of intellectual exclusiveness, and entering more and more into the life of the “common people” as friend, helper, inspirer, and guide.

RATIONALISM.

The function of rationalism is to co-ordinate faith and knowledge, so as to send the whole man to school to God. In every progressive religious culture rationalism is an essential factor of the progress, seizing upon the new knowledge to prevent the old faith from chilling into formalism or flaming into fanaticism. Rationalism embraces faith as well as knowledge, because faith is the only rational attitude of man toward the mystery of existence, which mystery is not lessened but deepened by the progress of knowledge. Knowledge has exploded many false and manufactured mysteries, but only to show that the real problem is inscrutable to our present vision.

Rationalism is not creative but regulative. There is a spurious rationalism which assumes creative functions, and seeks to evolve a rational faith from knowledge only, ignoring the very mystery of life which knowledge increasingly discloses. There is also a miscalled rationalism which is bond-slave to criticism, and whose only office is to *desiccate* the beliefs of man,—removing from them everything that has life or may germinate life. Rationalism, being the attitude toward all the facts of life of a mind dominated by reason, is itself subject to continual change as the mind develops and as new facts appear. The rationalism of yesterday is irrational to-day. It is fashionable just now to say that the business of life is to adjust one's self to his environment,—the assumption being that the environment is stable, and that man only is fluent and adaptive.

But if material progress means anything, it means that man is adjusting the environment to himself,—playing off one inflexible “law of nature” against another by means of his faculty of contrivance, and thus forcing it to yield to his desire and obey his will. Meanwhile man himself is developing and enlarging,—what he wanted yesterday does not satisfy him to-day ; and thus the real situation is that of an expanding mind within an expanding environment ; action and reaction going on, and neither the mind nor the environment finished yet.

ORDER.

Indispensable to the development of the God-consciousness in this age of the reign of law is the perception of the orderly ways in which the Divine Force acts. Order is not the only interpreter of God, His sole method of expressing Himself, but it is one of His methods. The present orderliness and stability of the physical universe appear to have been attained only after the protracted struggle toward equilibrium of divergent and warring forces. This equilibrium is not yet fully established ; subtle and potent forces occasionally disturb it. But the foundations of the world are laid in order ; and an arena is thus provided for the actions of man, through whom God is expressing Himself in higher ways than those of mere regularity and automatic order,—in spontaneity, selfhood, freedom, personality. These emerge upon the field of order as expressions of a higher energy, and by the help of order they transcend order, and subjugate it to personality.

Obedience to law is the first step toward freedom. The force whose law you implicitly obey will finally yield to the power of your personality, and obey you. It is the perception of this fact which has given the present generation its unparalleled control over the physical forces. But how that control shall be used is settled by a wholly different method than that by which the control was acquired. The modern superstition which extends the reign of law to all departments of the universe and all the activities of God is infinitely more oppressive and blighting to the spirit of man than any ancient superstition has been.

AUTOMATISM.

Without the miracle, — the sign of the dominance of a personal mind and will over the usual order of things, — personality is cancelled, and Law is only another name for Fate. Even though God is conceived as immanent in law, — that is, as the Force of which law is the method, — it does not in the least alter the fatalistic aspect. If God is imprisoned in law, — bound to unchangeable methods, — then God is only another name for Fate, and the freedom and spontaneity upon which human energies and hopes depend are vain illusions. Our so-called freedom exists only to conduct us to absolute bondage, to moral automatism, and there an end. We are free only that we may learn to be slaves to law, to obey mechanically and without effort; and when we have learned *that*, we are finished. That is heaven, — subjugation to law, annihilation of personality!

The truth that corrects this unendurable fatalism

is that there are many equally efficient methods of doing the same thing ; that goodness has a thousand ways of approach and consummation of equal excellence, among which we may choose. We shall never all conform to the same standard of goodness ; there is no absolute standard. Goodness is million-sided ; and as we did not begin alike, so we shall not end alike, but shall forever pursue the kind of excellence which suits and preserves our individuality. We are not on our way to uniformity ; we are not going to be all alike. Our individuality is to be always respected, our personality and selfhood forever preserved. We obey law that we may rise into freedom. This is the essential truth for which the miracle stands, and which renders it as indispensable to the highest religious development as it is apparently indispensable to the lowest. The miracle is the essential antithesis to law, speaks of a realm higher than law, stands for that very indefiniteness which is the condition of all energy and spontaneity,—stands for the transcendence of personality above all modes of force. Law is not God, it is only one—and that not the highest—of the methods of God. The miracle is all that saves the developing God-consciousness in man from that hopeless imprisonment in mere intellectual forms, of which the godless Buddhism is so conspicuous an example. Even the invented miracle is, as Martineau points out, the human product of the same truth that compels the assertion of miracle by the highest minds,—the possibility of the Divine entrance upon human conditions.

SUPERNATURALISM.

The old realm of the supernatural has been invaded by modern knowledge; and so many phenomena, formerly supposed to be purely supernatural, have been shown to belong to the realm of order that many pseudo-scientists, and some theologians after them, have jumped to the conclusion that this process may be indefinitely continued until the whole universe of mind and matter is included in what is known as "the order of nature." The fact is exactly the reverse. Even if you include under "nature" *everything that happens*, the background, the cause of the happenings, is not only not diminished, but is indefinitely augmented. "Nature can never swallow up the supernatural, any more than time can swallow up eternity. They subsist and are intelligible only together; and nothing can be more mistaken than to treat them as mutually exclusive." With every advance in the knowledge of phenomena, the non-phenomenal power is magnified, nor do we gain one inch upon its inscrutable domain. Qualitatively, indeed, we gain; a *character* dimly discloses itself in these heights and deeps of unknown power, suggestive of an Infinite Reason and Love lying at the heart of things.

HEAVEN AND HELL.

The idea of retribution is inseparable from the development of the God-consciousness. The general course of its development has been from the fanciful, arbitrary, and final, to the moral, equitable, and in-

strumental; that is, rewards and punishments are now understood as aids to the development of character, and not as ends or finalities. Heaven and hell are attributes of character. The recording angel, with his book and pen, is here. The accounting department has been transferred from the future to the present, from the outside of man to the inside, and is perceived as self-registering. There is something within us that keeps an exact record of what we do. Memory is the faculty by which we read off that record, and conscience is the faculty by which we judge it; but the record is there just the same whether memory reads and conscience judges it or not. We may bribe memory and drug conscience, but we cannot touch the indelible record which our acts make on character. Character is the judgment book of God, and all we do is written in it with an iron pen.

MASTERSHIP.

Indispensable to the culture of the God-consciousness is the master. Knowledge of God is the aim, but some earthly representative of God is the means, the Teacher, the Master. "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him [by means of him] whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." All religious culture centres around a personality,—a Master. From Abraham the Friend of God to Jesus the Son of God, is the course of Jewish religious development. In Buddhism the Master wholly obscures the God, as in one phase of Christianity the Master is identified with the God.

Religion could not, apparently, be propagated at all if the God-consciousness did not exist in all men, and in some men so strongly as to qualify and prompt them to be teachers. What makes these teaching-men so superior to other men in consciousness of God is a question which is susceptible, according to our present rationality, of but one rational answer, — God raises them up. No doubt there is a fortunate confluence of noble forces in every great soul, but does it only happen so? By no process can we get rid of the positive and negative magnetic poles. Two persons are necessary to every act of propagation, physical or spiritual. There are no hermaphrodite minds. Made ready, by whatever forces you please, to burn with inspiration, they must be touched and kindled. Religion is not self-evolved; it is developed by the touch of God. That touch is at first communicated through the True Master, known to be true by his eagerness to dispense with himself (“it is expedient for you that I go away”) until the consciousness of God is so fully developed in our enkindled souls that the great day arrives when “we all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.”

IMMORTALITY.

It is not the quantitative idea of immortality that makes it inseparable from religion. Mere continuance of duration on the same plane, though stretched out through æons, is not of the essence of religion. It is the *quality* of life with which religion concerns

itself; and it is the capacity of the soul of man to receive and enter upon the Divine and timeless life of God that guarantees its immortality. To -pass from time into eternity," as the phrase goes, is not to achieve immortality; but to enter into intimate relations with the Eternal Spirit is to achieve eternal life *and* immortality. Religion does not lead us up to the great gates of the mystery and command them to unfold upon a *longer* life only, but upon a higher, deeper, fuller life, in the faith and expectation of which this present struggling and checkered existence is transfigured by "the light that never shone on sea or land," — "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

THE END.

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